

A BRIEF EXPOSITION
WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS UPON THE
WHOLE BOOK OF
ECCLESIASTES
AND
THE SONG OF SOLOMON
BY
JOHN COTTON

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JOHN COTTON.

‘**W**ERE I master,’ says Cotton Mather, ‘of the pen wherewith Palladius embalmed his Chrysostom, the Greek patriarch, or Posidonius eternised his Austin, the Latin oracle, among the ancients; or were I owner of the quill wherewith among the moderns Beza celebrated his immortal Calvin, or Fabius immortalised his venerable Beza; the merits of John Cotton would oblige me to employ it in the preserving his famous memory.’ As we are neither possessed of one or other of these famous biographical pens, nor have space at our disposal for ought like a worthy memoir of this good divine, we shall content ourselves with extracting the record of the principal events of his life from the memoir by his grandson, of which we have just quoted the opening sentence.

John Cotton was born in the town of Derby on the 4th of December 1585. His father was Mr Roland Cotton, a lawyer, whose practice is stated to have been to urge his clients to endeavour to effect reconciliation or compromise, rather than have recourse to litigation. Both he and his wife were notably pious. Their son John showed such precocity as a boy, that at the age of thirteen he was admitted into Trinity College, Cambridge. Circumstances having prevented his obtaining a fellowship in Trinity, he

was transferred to Emmanuel College, and in that college was successively fellow, tutor, head-lecturer, dean, and catechist. Here he became famous for learning and eloquence; but for a time these were unsanctified. The account of the change that passed upon his soul we give at length in the words of his grandson.

Hitherto we have seen the life of Mr John Cotton, while he was not yet alive. Though the restraining and preventing grace of God had kept him from such outbreaks of sin as defile the lives of most in the world, yet like the old man, who for such a cause ordered this epitaph to be written on his grave, Here lies an old man, who lived but seven years; he reckoned himself to have been but a dead man, as being alienated from the life of God, until he had experienced that regeneration in his own soul, which was thus accomplished. The Holy Spirit of God had been at work upon his young heart, by the ministry of that reverend and renowned preacher of righteousness, Mr Perkins; but he resisted and smothered those convictions, through a vain persuasion, that if he being a godly man, it would spoil him for being a learned one. Yea, such was the secret enmity and prejudice of an unregenerate soul against real holiness, and such the torment which our Lord's witnesses give to the consciences of the earthly-minded, that when he heard the bell toll for the funeral of Mr Perkins, his mind secretly rejoiced in his deliverance from that powerful ministry, by which his conscience had been so often beleaguered; the remembrance of which thing afterwards did break his heart exceedingly. But he was at length more effectually awakened, by a sermon of Dr Sibbes, wherein was discoursed the misery of those who had only a negative righteousness, or a civil, sober, honest blamelessness before men. Mr Cotton became now very sensible of his own miserable condition before God; and the arrows of these convictions did stick so fast upon him, that after no less than three years disconsolate apprehensions under them, the grace of God made him a thoroughly renewed

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Christian, and filled him with a sacred joy, which accompanied him unto the fullness of joy for ever. For this cause, as persons truly converted unto God have a mighty and lasting affection for the instruments of their conversion; thus Mr Cotton's veneration for Dr Sibbs was after this very particular, and perpetual; and it caused him

to have the picture of that great man in that part of his house where he might oftenest look upon it. But so the yoke of sore temptations and afflictions, and long spiritual trials, fitted him to be an eminently useful servant of God in his generation.

It is worthy of very special note that the first sermon that he preached after his conversion was the means of the conversion of Dr Preston, who in his turn became one of the great lights of the university, and contributed more perhaps than any one else to the revival of vital religion, and the study of theology, which made the seventeenth century so notable an era in the history of religion and the Church in England.

Shortly after, Mr Cotton was elected minister of Boston, and despite of difficulties thrown in his way by a 'corrupt' mayor and an anti-puritan bishop, he was quietly settled in that town. Shortly after this he took the degree of Bachelor of Divinity, and on the recommendation of 'holy Mr Baynes', he married Elizabeth Horrocks, who was a very great help unto him in the service of God.

For twenty years Mr Cotton lived in Boston, and laboriously and faithfully discharged the duties of an evangelist and a pastor; and with such a blessing that there was a great reformation in the town, 'profaneness was extinguished, superstition was abandoned, religion was embraced and practised among the body of the people; yea, the mayor, with most of the magistrates, were now called puritans, and the 'Satanical party' was become insignificant.

During a great portion of the time that he spent in Boston, he was amongst those who scrupled at the 'vestments' and the 'ceremonies', and absolutely declined their use. For this he was for a short time silenced, but the storm blew over; and probably on account of the high esteem in which he was held by all classes in the place, he was long left unmolested. It seems to have been not without reason that the Bostonians esteemed him, for his renown as a preacher and a pastor contributed even to the worldly prosperity of the town. 'The inhabitants of Boston observed that God blessed them in their secular concernments remarkably the more through his dwelling among them; for many strangers, and some, too, that were gentlemen of good quality, resorted unto Boston, and some removed their habitations thither on his account; whereby the prosperity of the place was very much promoted.'

His indefatigable labours in the Lincolnshire fens at last began to tell on his health. A tertian ague lay upon him for a whole year. This led to

his leaving Boston for a change of air. He recovered, but his wife died. Shortly after, 'Mrs Sarah Story, a virtuous widow, very dear to his former wife, became his consort, and by her he had both sons and daughters.'

It would seem to have been while he was still absent from Boston that he was accused to the High Commission Court. Powerful intercession was made on his behalf by the Earl of Dorset, but to no purpose. That nobleman intimated to him that 'if he had been guilty of drunkenness, or uncleanness, or any such lesser fault, he could have obtained his pardon; but inasmuch as he had been guilty of nonconformity and puritanism, the crime was unpardonable; and therefore, said he, you must fly for your safety.' This advice, after much prayerful consideration and consultation with friends, he

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resolved to follow. Accordingly he was proceeding in disguise to a seaport, with the view of proceeding to Holland; but, meeting a friend, he was advised to go to London, and there, in conference with many pious ministers, the resolution was formed that he should rather go to New England. The paragraph containing the account of his voyage we must give without abridgment:

The God that had carried him through the fire of persecution, was now graciously with him in his passage through the water of the Atlantic Ocean, and he enjoyed a comfortable voyage over the great and wide sea. There were then three eminent ministers of God in the ship, namely, Mr Cotton, Mr Hooker, and Mr Stone, which glorious triumvirate coming together, made the poor people in the wilderness, at their coming, to say, That the God of heaven had supplied them with what would in some sort answer their three great necessities: Cotton for their clothing, Hooker for their fishing, and Stone for their building. But by one or other of these three divines in the ship, there was a sermon preached every day, all the while they were aboard, yea, they had three sermons or expositions, for the most part every day: of Mr Cotton in the morning, Mr Hooker in the afternoon, Mr Stone after supper, in the evening. And after they had been a month upon the seas, Mr Cotton received a mercy, which God had now for twenty years denied unto him, in the birth of his eldest son, whom he called Seaborn, in the remembrance of the never-to-be-forgotten blessings which he thus enjoyed upon the seas. But at the end of seven weeks they arrived at New England,

September 3, in the year 1633, where he put ashore at New Boston, which in a few years, by the smile of God, especially upon the holy wisdom, conduct, and credit of our Mr Cotton, upon some accounts of growth, came to exceed Old Boston in everything that renders a town considerable. And it is remarkable, that his arrival at New England was just after the people there had been by solemn fasting and prayer seeking unto God, that inasmuch as they had been engaging to walk with him in his ordinances according to his word, he would mercifully send over to them such as might be eyes unto them in the wilderness, and strengthen them in discerning and following of that word.

Dr Cotton's share in the legislation of the colony is matter of history. He probably overstrained the application of the Jewish law; but undoubtedly for a time virtue abounded and good order reigned, and the blessing of God rested upon the colony. For a time, too, the churches flourished, and there were daily added unto the church such as should be saved. But tares were sown amongst the wheat. An antinomian party sprang up; and Dr Cotton, through the greatness of his charity thinking no evil, was supposed to favour them, and had no little difficulty in vindicating himself from the foul reproach. It seems perfectly clear that there was no foundation for it; but it was propagated in various books and pamphlets, and the echo of it may be occasionally heard till this day.

In 1641, Cotton received an invitation from many distinguished men to return to England. It was even contemplated to send over a ship on purpose to bring him back: but the design was abandoned; and as he had spent twenty years in the old English Boston, so he spent twenty in the New England Boston.

At length he caught a cold, which became inflammation of the lungs and asthma, and he had a presentiment that his course was done. He feared not death, for the rod and the staff of the Lord the Shepherd comforted him.

While he thus by sick, the magistrates, the ministers of the country, and Christians of all sorts resorted unto him, as unto a public father, full of sad apprehensions at the withdrawal of such a public blessing; and the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, while he had strength to utter the profitable conceptions of his mind, caused them to reckon these their visits the gainfullest that ever they had

made. Among others, the then President of the College, with many tears, desired of Mr Cotton, before his departure,

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to bestow his blessing on him, saying, I know in my heart they whom you bless shall be blessed. And not long before his death, he sent for the elders of the church, whereof he himself was also an elder; who having, according to the apostolical direction, prayed over him, he exhorted them to feed the flock over which they were overseers, and increase their watch against those declensions which he saw the professors of religion falling into; adding, I have now, through grace, been more than forty years a servant unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and have ever found him a good master. When his colleague, Mr Wilson, took his leave of him with a wish that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, he instantly replied, God hath done it already, brother. He then called for his children, with whom he left the gracious covenant of God, as their never-failing portion; and now desired that he might be left private the rest of his minutes, for the more freedom of his applications unto the Lord. So lying speechless a few hours, he breathed his blessed soul into the hands of his heavenly Lord, on the twenty-third of December 1652, entering on the sixty-eighth year of his own age; and on the day, yea, at the hour of his constant weekly labours in the lecture, wherein he had been so long serviceable, even to all the churches of New England. Upon Tuesday the twenty-eighth of December he was most honourably interred, with a most numerous concourse of people, and the most grievous and solemn funeral that was ever known perhaps upon the American strand; and the lectures in his church the whole winter following, performed by the neighbouring ministers, were but so many funeral sermons upon the death and worth of this extraordinary person, among which the first, I think, was preached by Mr Richard Mather, who gave unto the bereaved church of Boston this great character of their incomparable Cotton, Let us pray that God would raise up some Eleazar to succeed this Aaron; but you can hardly expect that so large a portion of the Spirit of God should dwell in any one, as dwelt in this blessed man! And generally in the other churches through the country, the expiration of this general blessing to them all did produce funeral sermons full of honour and sorrow; even as many miles above an hundred as Newhaven was distant from the Massachuset

Bay, when the tidings of Mr Cotton's decease arrived there, Mr Davenport with many tears bewailed it, in a public discourse on that in 2 Samuel 1:26, 'I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan, very pleasant hast the been unto me'. Yea, they speak of Mr Cotton in their lamentations to this day.

In a time when there were giants upon the earth, the mental and spiritual stature of John Cotton was notable. His piety, his learning, his ministerial laboriousness, were all gigantic. Two centuries and a half have not obscured his fame: by his published writings he still speaketh; and his name is held in veneration in that city and state whose character he so materially contributed to mould, and to which he gave a distinctness which all the attritions of a quarter of a millennium have not obliterated.

I

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

MR GEORGE CABORN, MAYOR;

**WITH THE ALDERMEN, COMMON COUNCIL, MINISTERS,
AND THE REST OF MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, OF
BOSTON IN LINCOLNSHIRE.**

DEARLY BELOVED,—The large interest which I have long enjoyed in your favour, and which you must ever have in my heart, hath emboldened me to prefix your names to this piece; and with the more confidence of your acceptance, because in it an address is made to you at once by two, who sometimes were together your ministers in the gospel of Christ: by the ever-to-be-honoured Mr Cotton in the book, and by my unworthy self in the review and dedication of it; both now removed from you. The one, first to a remote part of the world, there to plant churches, and thence (after that happy work done) to heaven; the other, to some more public service nearer hand, in which I humbly crave the best help of your prayers, as you are constantly remembered in mine; and that with more strength of affection, whilst I oft call to mind those most comfortable days, in which I enjoyed the happiness of joint-ministry with so able and faithful a guide, and both of us so much satisfaction and encouragement from a people so united in the love both of the truth and of one another. I cannot read what Paul writeth of his

Thessalonians (the first chapters of both his epistles to them), but I think I read over what we then found in Boston. They were then very happy days with you, when your faith did grow exceedingly, and your love to Christ's ordinances, ministers, servants, and to one another abounded. Although your town be situate in a low country, yet

God then raised your esteem very high, and your eminency in piety overtopped the height of your steeple; your 'name was as an ointment poured out', Canticles 1:3; and your 'renown went forth, for that beauty and comeliness which God had put upon you', Ezekiel 16:14. How it is now with you, at this distance I cannot so well judge; only I desire you would please seriously to consider whether the new wine or the old be better, and ever think that best which doth not intoxicate us into staggering from the truth, and falling off from one another; but so cheereth the heart, as yet maketh us humble and meek, and keepeth us close to God, his truth, ordinances, the power of his grace, and all those duties in which the faithful among you formerly walked with God, met with peace, and at last reached heaven. Such a frame of spirit and way, I can remember, was sometimes among you; and as oft as I remember it, I desire not to forget to praise God for it. 'What was then your blessedness?' Galatians 4:15. And what then was, I humbly beseech God may so revive and continue, that you may prove a little model and foretaste of that blessed church, which God will 'make an eternal excellency, and a joy of many generations', Isaiah 60:15. This you and I have the more cause to desire and endeavour, because,

1. *Miserum est fuisse*, it is a great misery to have it said of us, that we have been happy. *Fuimus*

2

Troes, fuit Ilium, was but a sad word; and it is a sadder thing for the Sun of righteousness, which had sometimes shone gloriously upon any particular church or people, at last to set in a cloud. If such a light come to be darkened, 'how great is that darkness!' After the light is put out, the room proveth darker than if it had never been set up; and the remembrance of those former pleasant things, once enjoyed, but afterwards lost, added to, and aggravated the church's lamentation, Lamentations 1:7.

2. And yet such a lamentable condition hath been and may be the lot of such places and people, which God sometimes hath highly honoured, when they have grown fat and wanton together. Bethel hath proved Bethaven, Hosea 10:5; in after times we find young profane mockers in Bethel, 2 Kings 2; and scornful neuters in Penuel, Judges 8:8. Go to Shiloh, Jeremiah 7:12; think of the sometimes glorious churches of Asia. As empires and kingdoms, so particular churches have had their periods. I have sometimes on purpose visited some places where God had before planted his church and a faithful ministry, to see if I could discern any footsteps and remembrances of such a mercy; and 'lo, they were all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof is broken down', Proverbs 24:31.

3. And which is more sad, in some of them never, in others very hardly built up again; God proving severe when we grow wanton And so, as he removeth the candlestick, Revelation 2:5, when we play or fight by the light of the candle set up in it, so he is very hardly induced to light it again in that place where it hath once been wantonly or frowardly put out. There are more hopes of recovering a particular person fallen, by virtue of an everlasting covenant made with him, although he may go halting to his grave, and never here again rise up to his former comforts and enlargements; but a particular church or people (unless it be that of the Jews, who in the great jubilee after their rejection shall again return to their former possessions, Jeremiah 3:1, 12–14, and 8:4) cannot claim the like privilege of such a covenant. The ark never returned to the same place from whence it was in a way of judgment removed; and the glory of the Lord, when, after its gradual removes, was at last quite gone from the first temple,

was not fully restored in the second, till Christ's first coming; nor will it be in this their rejection, till his second. I think there will be found very few instances of God's presence and ordinances, long enjoyed by a people, and after abused and rejected, if thereupon lost, easily, if at all, restored. The 'faith once delivered to the saints', Jude 3, is not wont to be received or lost the second time. The reason is, because a jealous God can least endure, upon trial made of him, to be slighted in that wherein he would most commend to us his special love, and ever accounts the rejecting of such special tokens of it as a renouncing of himself: 'They have not rejected thee, but me', 1 Samuel 8:7. And as the husband in the

law pleaded some uncleanness in his wife, when he put her away, Deuteronomy 24:1, so God makes account that we tell the world, that we have found iniquity in him, when we go far from him, and walk after vanity, and that he hath been a wilderness and land of darkness, when we prove lords, and will come no more at him, Jeremiah 2:5, 31. Dear friends, he hath not been so to you, even your enemies being judges; and your own experience will bear witness for him, that his gospel, even in point of outward advantage, hath paid for its entertainment. These thick cords of love therefore, I hope, will bind you close to him, and strongly draw you off from whatever may be a means of drawing you away from him; and so, by your continuing to be planted in the house of the Lord, and by your still flourishing in the courts of our God, you will proclaim to all that he is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in him, Psalm 92:13–15. These, dearly beloved, are my affectionate desires and hopes of you; and yet, in regard of the unsettledness of these times, and the wildness of many men's spirits in them, you will pardon me if I be 'jealous over you with a godly jealousy'; and that having this fit opportunity, I take the boldness, by 'putting you in remembrance' of what sometimes you were, 2 Peter 1:13, to stir you up to keep warm your first love, Revelation 2:4–5, and to do your first works; to be watchful, and to strengthen the things that remain, especially if any be ready to die, Revelation 3:2; to hold fast the form of sound words, 2 Timothy 1:13, whereto you have been formerly delivered, Romans 6:17, and to hold up the power of godliness:—

3

In yourselves, by the constant exercise of faith, repentance, self-examination and humiliation, self-denial and mortification, &c.

In your public government, by reviving your ancient care and zeal for the sanctifying of God's Sabbaths, countenancing his ministers and ordinances, and discountenancing whatever doctrines or practices are contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, and the power of godliness.

In your families, by private prayer, singing of psalms, catechising your children and servants, training them up in God's fear, and restraining them from that pride, wantonness, and stubbornness which your faithful pastor (now with God) was wont much to complain of, and which in these looser times I wish you had not cause much more now to bewail.

Now the good Lord help you to stand up for God in your several places, and so serve your generation, Acts 13:36; that peace and truth may

be in your days, 2 Kings 20:19; that in them your sun may not go down, but when you are gathered to your fathers, in your hopeful and happy posterity it may rise with greater strength and glory, as drawing nearer to a more glorious day now approaching; that then another generation may not arise after

you, which shall not know the God of their fathers, Judges 2:30, and so the ages to come may be to seek for *Samnium in Samnio*, old Boston in new. But on the contrary,

That your seed may be so known among the Gentiles, and your offspring among the people, that all that see them may acknowledge them to be the seed which the Lord hath blessed, Isaiah 61:9.

That this may be the everlasting covenant which God shall make with you and them, that his Spirit and word shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever, Isaiah 59:21.

But that your congregation may be a Zion, which God hath chosen, and desired for his habitation; of which he may say, This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it,—is, and, God enabling me, shall be, the most hearty desire and prayer of him

Who desireth to have no dominion over your faith,

But to be a helper of your joy,

ANTHONY TUCKNEY.

From St John's College in Cambridge,

July 7, 1654.

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A BRIEF EXPOSITION UPON ECCLESIASTES.

THIS whole book is a discourse not unseasonable for this country, wherein men, that have left all to enjoy the gospel, now, as if they had forgotten the end for which they came hither, are ready to leave the

gospel for outward things; which are here lively and clearly demonstrated to be vanity, yea, vanity of vanities.

Objection. But were not something of Christ more proper for a minister of the gospel to handle?

Answer. The way to stir us up to seek after Christ, is to behold and be convinced of the vanity of all things here below.

When Eve brought forth *Cain*, she hoped she had got the promised seed, Genesis 4:1, with 3:15.

But when she saw, by his spirit and carriage, that she was deceived in him, she called her next son *Abel*, Genesis 4:2, which signifieth *vanity*.

And so she must see all things to be, before she bring forth *Seth*, the father of the promised seed. Now *Abel*, or *vanity*, expresseth the state of all the creatures by the fall; and *Solomon* taketh up *Eve's* word, and amplifieth it, 'vanity, yea, vanity of vanities'. So this whole book is a commentary upon the state of corruption, Romans 8:20. A fit introduction to Christ in the Canticles.

CHAPTER I.

Versè 1. The words of the Preacher, the Son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Versè 2. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

The chief good of the sons of men, which the moral philosophers among the heathen sought after but found not, *Solomon* in this book truly and fully openeth to us. The philosophers being vain and wicked themselves, how could they find or teach the true chief good? But this wise and good king, upon his own experience, both found it himself, and taught us to find it after him.

The sum of his discourse standeth upon these two points: 1. That the chief good of the sons of men is not to be found in all the creatures under the sun, nor in men's labours and ways about them; for they are all vanity and vexation of spirit. 2. That it is to be found in the fear of God and keeping his commandments, chapter 12:13.

These two verses contain, first, The title of the book; wherein the book is set forth, 1. By the author; 2. And he by (1.) His condition, *Cohelèth*. (2.) His lineage, *the son of David*. (3.) By his office, *a king*. (4.) The place of his government, in *Jerusalem*, verse 1.

Secondly, The argument, or sum of his discourse, or at least of the former part of it, verse 2. Wherein is set forth, 1. The condition of all things, by the adjunct of *vanity*, 'All is vanity'. And this vanity is amplified by many ornaments of rhetoric:—

1. A *hyperbole*, *vanity* itself for vain.
2. *Polyptoton*, *vanity of vanities*.
3. *Epizeuxis* (the like sound continued in the same sentence), *vanity of vanities*.
4. *Anadiplosis*, (the same sound repeated in the end of one sentence, and the beginning of the other); *vanity of vanities, vanity, &c.*

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5. *Epanalepsis* (the same sound repeated in the beginning of the sentence, and in the end), *vanity, &c., all is vanity*.
 6. *Anaphora* (the same sound repeated in the beginning of the sentences) *vanity, &c., vanity, &c.*
 7. *Epistrophe* (the same sound repeated in the end of the sentences), *of vanities, &c., of vanities*.
 8. *Epanodos* (the same sound repeated in the beginning and midst, in the midst and end), *vanity, vanity, vanity*.
 9. *Numerus oratorius* (the same number of syllables repeated in both sentences), *vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities*.
 10. *Climax* (the same sound continued and increased by degrees), *vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, &c.*
 11. *Paranormasia* (the repeating of like sounds, yet somewhat differing).
2. This confirmed by the testimony of *Copheleth*, 'saith the Preacher', verse 2.

Verse 1. *The words of Copheleth*. Solomon had four names—Solomon, Jedidiah, Lemuel, Copheleth, 2 Samuel 12:24–25; Proverbs 31:1,4, and the text. This name, *Copheleth*, is only given him in this book, when, after long experience of all earthly vanities, he in his old age speaketh to wean his people from them, and teacheth them the fear of the Lord for their chief good.

It is a participle of a verb out of use in the active voice, yet in the passive used to signify, *to be gathered*, or *assembled*; whence קהל, a congregation; תקהל, then, being a noun or participle of the feminine gender, may imply to us these three things:

First, Solomon's gathering himself to the church and assembling therewith, when yet his wives, and many other idolaters with them, assembled to the conventicles and synagogues of false gods.

Secondly, That in this true church assembled he was *anima concionans, in hæc verba*; he spake these words, or delivered them in the congregation, by word or writing, as a testimony of his repentance; which may also further appear if we consider,

1. What he saith by his experience of the dangerousness of enticing women, even his own, and of his deliverance out of their hands, as being beloved of God, Ecclesiastes 7:26–98.

2. The frame of the whole book, which speaketh sadly of the bitterness of all earthly vanities after his long experience of all of them in his old age.

Thirdly, That he delivered these things from his heart and soul, not out of any policy of state, to satisfy the people, Psalm 68:11; Isaiah 40:9.

So the feminine gender is expounded, Psalm 16:2.

Use 1. To persuade us of Solomon's repentance after his fall. Such as think he fell finally and totally are not only hereby refuted, but by all those arguments which prove the perseverance of the saints, which are many and impregnable; and besides, by such other arguments as more peculiarly concern Solomon himself; as,

1. Our Saviour's testimony that all the prophets are in heaven, Luke 13:28.

Now Solomon was a prophet, seeing the whole Scripture was penned by no other but prophets and apostles, 2 Peter 1:19–21; Ephesians 2:20.

Balaam, though he prophesied, as did also Saul, yet neither of them were prophets—a spirit of prophecy rested not upon them, Joshua 13:22.

2. He is said to be loved of God, and therefore by God's own appointment to be named Jedidiah, 2 Samuel 12:25.

Now God's love is the pledge, as of Jacob's election, Romans 9:13, so of Solomon's. God is not wont to give names to things but according as he findeth; them, or purposeth to make them: 'Whom he loveth, he loveth to the end', John 13:1. To say that was only meant in regard of not taking the kingdom from him and his posterity, as he did from Saul, is to wrest the text, which promiseth,

1. That he will be a father to him.

2. For his person, that he will not take his mercy from him.

3. For his kingdom, that it shall not be taken away.

Use 2. To teach us to accept this book with greater respect. The sun never shineth more gloriously than when it breaketh forth out of some dark cloud, nor the graces of God's Spirit than when they have overwrestled some cloud of temptations and sins, and break forth into repentance. So was it with David also in Psalm 51.

The son of David; which he mentioneth in sundry respects.

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First, It is honourable to be the son of a prince, Ecclesiastes 10:17.

Secondly, It procureth the more reverence to a prophet to be the son of a prophet.

Thirdly, It is comfortable to be the son of a man after God's own heart, for the covenant's sake, Genesis 17:7; and especially of David, for the promise sake made to him and to his seed after him, 2 Samuel 7:12–16.

Use 1. To procure reverent acceptance of the doctrine of this book for the penman's sake; for though it little skilleth what the pen be, of a goose or swan's quill, or raven's, yet when God delighteth to use such an instrument, so richly adorned with many privileges, it challengeth from us the more due respect. It is a book written by the eldest son of wisdom.

Use 2. To teach parents that send their children to the university, to seek to excel in eminency of grace, and love amongst men. It will add some lustre and credit to their children's ministry, as Zacharias and Elisabeth's godliness, Luke 1:6, did to John Baptist's, and David's to Solomon's.

King in Jerusalem. King, as having sovereign power of life and death; to whom it belonged to be as a head to counsel, and direct, and rule the people; to be also as a shepherd to feed the people with wholesome laws and institutions, and examples of good life, and to drive them from feeding in unwholesome pastures, upon unsavoury vanities.

In Jerusalem. The city of God, the mother church of Israel, then a faithful city, full of faithful and good people, though afterwards a harlot.

He doth not say, 'king of Israel', as Proverbs 1:1, but 'in Jerusalem', intimating that his conversing in this faithful city, amongst so many good people, was some means the sooner to bring him to a sight of his sin, and to inditing and penning these words, which show his repentance.

It could not be but that Solomon must needs read in the countenances of his people, when he came abroad to church and judgment-seat, and hear likewise by intelligence of his wise counsellors, how much the citizens of Jerusalem were grieved with his building idolatrous temples,

and tolerating false worship in them; the which might well provoke him to a more serious sight of his sin, and to make mention of the city in 'the words that show his

repentance. Besides, in a penitential discourse, the full latitude of titles is unseasonable.

Use 1. To show us that God useth instruments of all sorts in penning the Scriptures, as well some kings, as David and Solomon; as some fishermen, as amongst the apostles; and herdsmen, as Amos; and priests, as Jeremiah; that all sorts might meet with style and phrase of speech meet for them.

Use 2. That it is no disgrace to any man, or to any man's children, to be preachers. Solomon and David, both kings and both prophets; yea, Solomon studying to teach the people knowledge, Ecclesiastes 12:9–10. The angels, higher than the highest men, are 'all ministering spirits', &c., Hebrews 1:14.

Use 3. It is no unbeseeing office for kings to write good books, or to publish their repentance after their public sins, Psalm 51.

Use 4. To let us see what a benefit it is for a minister or magistrate to live amongst good people. They naturally help one another to avoid sin, and to come out of it.

Use 5. To add still the more due respect to this book, penned by a king, and a king of the church of God.

Use 6. To teach penitents, not to affect the expression of titles or styles of honour at large.

Verse 2. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

Vanity of vanities, &c. The logical and rhetorical resolution of these words is delivered above in opening the first verse.

Doctrine 1. All things under the sun, whether creatures of God or labours of men, are altogether vain to the attaining of true happiness; or thus, are excessively, diversely, wonderfully vain. The chief things which men seek for in this life are vain in a threefold respect:

1. To find the chief good in them.
2. To satisfy the soul, Isaiah 55:2.
3. To make that good they are made for of themselves, Psalm 33:17.

For the gathering of this point from the true meaning of the text, compare this place with verse 3,14, and chapter 2:3. In this sense Paul calleth all things loss (dross, dung), Philippians 3:7–8, to wit, not only without Christ, or in comparison of him, but for the attainment of Christ or true happiness.

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The ground of this point may be most fitly showed in opening the several acceptions of *vanity* in the Scripture, and observing how they all agree in all things in the world in this respect. Vanity is put for,

1. Unprofitableness, as here, verses 2–3; Malachi 3:14; which agreeth to worldly things, Matthew 16:26, a man may have the whole world, and lose his soul; and then what profit did they yield him? Proverbs 11:4.

2. Emptiness, Psalm 2:1; 1 Corinthians 3:20. Vain, that is, void of substance and worth and sufficiency. So Isaiah 36:5, to which also agreeth Isaiah 29:8, and 55:2.

3. Lightness, Psalm 62:9; which is also true, Deuteronomy 32:47. The like may be said of all earthly things in this case.

4. Falsehood and lying, Psalm 12:2, and 4:2; which also holdeth here, Psalm 31:6; Jonah 2:8.

5. Frustration or disappointment of the end, Psalm 127:1–2. Unless the Lord build and keep the house and city, the builder's and watchman's care will fall short of the end they aim at, and so the work is in vain, James 1:26; 1 Corinthians 15:14.

6. Frailty or inconstancy, vanishing away as smoke, Romans 3:20, 21; Psalm 144:4; Isaiah 40:6–8.

7. Iniquity, 2 Chronicles 13:7; Proverbs 12:11.

8. Folly, Job 11:12; Proverbs 12:11.

Reasons of the vanity to those former ends:

1. From the end for which God made them—to wit, for us, not us for them, 1 Corinthians 3:22.

2. From their condition; they are corporal, temporal, and therefore cannot feed, much less satisfy an eternal spirit, Luke 12:19, 20.

3. From the curse lying upon them since the fall, Genesis 3:17.

Reasons of the repetition of this vanity, and the Holy Ghost's manner of speech in expressing this vanity:

1. To show the excessiveness of the vanity of these earthly things.

Vanity implieth they are not only vain, but exceedingly vain; as vain as vanity itself.

Vanity of vanities is in the Hebrew a superlative form of speech, to set forth the highest vanity; as the song of songs, the most excellent song; the king of kings, the servant of servants, the chiefest king, the most servile servant.

2. To show the multitude and variety of vanities heaped up in earthly things. There is a nest, as it were, of vanity in them; or, as Samson speaks in another case, Judges 15:16, 'heaps upon heaps'.

3. For admiration. To show the wonderful and strange vanity of these things, he breaketh forth into this exclamation, 'O vanity of vanities', &c.

Use 1. To show us what a great change sin maketh in the world: it doth, as it were, blast the virtue and beauty of the creature.

Time was, before sin entered, when God saw all the creatures to be very good, Genesis 1:31. Now, after sin had blown upon them, he looked upon them again, and all is vanity. Such a change will sin make in us, and in our counsels and courses.

Use 2. To show us what a woeful change they: make that sell their souls to commit sin for any earthly benefits, which are but vanity, Jonah 2:8; Isaiah 5:18. Temptations from earthly things may draw on sin like cart ropes, but they are the cart ropes of vanity. And so do they that change the ordinances of God for accommodations which are under the sun.

Use 3. To show us the vanity of men beyond all creatures, Psalm 119:89. He for whose sake all the rest became vain, is much more vain himself, Psalm 62. He is lighter than vanity, Isaiah 40:17.

Use 4. To teach us not to set our hearts on earthly things, Psalm 62:10, neither by,

1. Coveting them before we have them, Proverbs 23:4-5.

2. Confidently trusting in them, or proudly rejoicing in them, when we have them, Job 31:24-25.

3. Grieving when we part from them, Job 1:21.

Use 5. To exhort us to lay up better treasure than these earthly vanities, Matthew 6:19, 20.

Use 6. For a sign of trial of our repentance. Such as see nothing but glory and goodliness in these outward things, Satan hath bewitched them, Matthew 4:8. But such as see the extreme vanity of them have repented with Solomon here.

Use 7. To teach us it is no vanity to teach the vanity of the creatures in rhetorical elegancies. Here are many tropes of rhetoric used, so Romans 12:5, with these cautions:

1. That the rhetoric be suitable to the matter, grave and holy; else it is bastard rhetoric.

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2. That it set forward the end of the discourse, to wit, to affect the health with the sense of the matter in hand.

Verse 2. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

In that Solomon sets the seal of his testimony to the vanity of all these earthly things, after the long trial of them, observe this:

Doctrine. They that have had most trial of all earthly comforts are most ready and best able to avouch the vanity of them.

Who could haste more to outward things than Solomon, and yet be more confident in avouching the vanity of them?

Reason 1. Experience is a divine testimony, as being taken from the work of God, in the event of things coming to pass by providence.

Reason 2. Experience is of great authority with men, as being an argument more sensible, and less subject to ignorance or error.

Use. To show us a broad difference of earthly things from spiritual and heavenly. Earthly things seem goodly and glorious, till we have them and good trial of them, and afterwards we find them altogether vanity; but heavenly things seem vanity till we have them, and good trial of them, then seem they excellent and divine: no gain, no glory, no comfort like to that which they yield.

Before we leave this verse, let us remove a false collection which one maketh from this word—that reading is preaching, because Solomon calleth his book (though read) the Preacher.

But for answer, consider, 1. Solomon doth not call his book, but himself, the Preacher.

2. He might from hence collect that the preacher may deliver his sermon by writing, and so that writing may be preaching; but that reading therefore is preaching followeth not. For in writing, a minister may and doth make use of spiritual gifts requisite in a prophet or preacher, to the exercise of his ministry, 1 Corinthians 14:1; but not so in reading, which even a school-boy may perform, that never attained any spiritual gift at all.

Verse 3. What profit hath a man of all the labour which he hath under the sun?

Labour under the sun is labour taken about the creatures or things under the sun; for the labour a man taketh for the favour of God, the fellowship of the blood and Spirit of Christ, &c., is labour for things above the sun. Whence such are said to converse in heaven, Philippians 3:20, and to walk with God, Genesis 5:24.

What profit. To wit, towards the attaining of true happiness; otherwise, in all labour there is some profit towards the helping of our earthly estates, Proverbs 14:23.

This verse is an ἐπιμονή, or dwelling upon the former conclusion, of the vanity of all things, delivered in the former verse, and here repeated in other words more plainly.

Doctrine. All the labour a man taketh, whether of mind or body, about the creatures under the sun, is altogether unprofitable towards the attainment of true happiness, chapter 2:22, and 3:9.

Reasons from the disproportion of these creatures to our happiness:—

Reason 1. All these creatures are under the sun, but our happiness is above it. Now, as water can never ascend higher, nor carry any other thing higher, than the fountain from whence it came, so neither can things below the sun carry us up to a condition above the sun.

2. These creatures are temporal, our happiness eternal, 2 Corinthians 4:18.

3. These things are changeable and unsettled, but our happiness unchangeable.

Use 1. To wean us from immoderate labour after these things which cannot profit. It many times falleth out that those things which we labour most to avoid are the most behoveful to attainment of happiness, as afflictions, Psalm 119:67,71.

Use 2. To stir up to labour principally for heavenly blessings, things above the sun, Isaiah 55:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Verse 4. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever.

Verse 5. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteneth to the place where he arose.

That which Solomon taught us in the former verse, the unprofitableness of all labour about worldly things towards the attainment of happiness, he confirmeth

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in the rest of this chapter, and the rest which follow, by induction of sundry sorts of labours, wherein men usually weary themselves, but in vain. And first he beginneth with the vanity of the labour of the mind about the study of natural things, which in this whole chapter he showeth to be unprofitable to the attainment of happiness, by two reasons.

1. The first taken from the want of such things as accompany true happiness—to wit, stability, satiety, newness, in natural things. The reason standeth thus:

The knowledge and study of such things as want stability, satiety, newness, is unprofitable to the attainment of true happiness; but the knowledge and study of such things, is of such things as want stability, satiety, novelty.

This want of stability he proves by the state,

1. Of bodies mixed of the four elements, which are generable and corruptible, come and go, verse 4.

2. Of the four elements.

(1.) Of the sun, the chariot of fire, verse 5.

(2.) Of the wind or air, verse 6.

(3.) Of the water, verse 7.

(4.) Only the earth standeth still in the midst of all these restless motions.

[1.] Partly as a centre about which these move.

[2.] Partly as a theatre upon which every generation cometh and goes, verse 4.

Whence, though it be stable, yet we want stability in it, which is all one to us as if it were not stable.

Their want of satiety he showeth, verse 8.

Their want of novelty, verse 9–11.

2. The second reason is taken from his own experience, verse 12, to the end of the chapter.

Doctrine 1. Such things as come by generation stand not at a stay, but pass away (pass away by corruption), Job 14:1; Psalm 49:7–9; Joshua 23:14; 1 Kings 2:2.

Reason 1. From the causes in nature whereof they are generated, which are the four elements, and they contrary one to another. Now, contrary

things, being divided one against another, make the whole body of short continuance, one wasting another till all fail, Matthew 12:25. Heat against cold, and; moisture against dryness, work continually one against another, till all be consumed.

Besides, in living creatures the disproportion between *Calor naturalis* and *Humidum radicale*, causeth

dissolution; the food received breedeth not such kindly heat and moisture as is daily spent, but a more mild heat and more raw moisture.

Objection. How, then, could Adam's life be maintained for ever, if he had stood in innocency?

Answer. By the almighty power of God subduing and keeping these contrary qualities in a sweet temper and harmony, even by the same hand whereby he kept the wild beasts from preying upon the tame, allowing them to eat nothing but grass, Genesis 1:30.

Reason 2. From the curse which sin brought with it, even the bondage of corruption upon the creature, Romans 6:23, and 8:20–21. It is commonly said of the oak that it liveth three hundred years—growing one hundred, standing at a stay another hundred, and decaying the next hundred. The Holy Ghost recordeth of the patriarchs that they lived many hundreds, Genesis 5.

Pliny out of Hesiod describeth nine ages to the crow, sometimes as much more to the hart, and yet three times as much more to the raven, *Nat. Hist.*, lib. vii. c. 48.

But yet all these, being compounded and generated of the four elements, do in the end return into them again by dissolution and corruption.

Use 1. To teach us (that which is Solomon's scope) that the study of these natural things is not available to the attainment of true happiness; for how should that which is restless (and, as Solomon's word is, full of labour) procure us settled rest and tranquillity, which accompanieth true happiness? The mind of man, as philosophers have observed, is somewhat assimilated into the nature of the object which it studieth and is conversant about: as mariners, who are conversant about winds, and seas, and storms, are more boisterous; shepherds and herdsmen more brutish; foresters more wild; butchers more bloody, &c. So the study of these restless creatures leaveth the mind more restless.

In particular, the study and knowledge of the passing away of one generation after another showeth us our mortality and misery, and thereby yieldeth us grief and vexation, but no relief if we rest there.

Use 2. To exhort us to lift up our hearts to true wisdom, by the consideration of this unsettledness of our estates, Psalm 90:10,12; Deuteronomy 32:29. Prepare

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for a change; it is a-coming, Hebrews 13:14; Micah 2:10.

Use 3. To exhort to weanedness in our present condition, and contentment in all estates, 1 Corinthians 7:29–31.

Use 4. To exhort to fruitfulness in good things whilst we here abide, 2 Peter 1:13–15.

Doctrine 2. As one generation passeth away, so another cometh.

The sun setteth, and ariseth the same again; trees may be cut down, and yet spring again; not so we, but others come in our place, Job 14:7–10.

Reason 1. God will always have his church to call upon him in this world whilst the world standeth.

Reason 2. God will have the elder generations to instruct and govern the younger, and the younger to yield reverence and obedience to the elder, which cannot be unless one generation be coming on as another passeth away.

Use 1. To refute the Pythagorean dotage of returning of the same persons again many years after their death.

Use 2. To stir up the generations passing away to be helpful to the generation coming on, in good counsels, instructions, examples, &c., Psalm 71:18, and 78:3, 4; Isaiah 38:13,19.

Use 3. To teach the younger sort, as they come after, so to make some benefit of their ancestors' going before, observing whatsoever was commendable in them and imitating it; and eschewing whatsoever was evil and dangerous, Zechariah 1:5–6.

Doctrine 3. Though one generation passeth away, and another cometh on, yet the earth abideth for ever.

As one harvest is gathered another cometh, yet the earth or soil still remaineth, standeth.

Reason 1. God's word establishing it, and that even upon nothing, Psalm 33:9; Job 26:7.

Use 1. Against Copernicus's opinion of the revolution of the earth, and the standing still of the sun, Psalm 19:5, and 119:90. If the earth moved swiftly, when a man throweth a stone the same way the earth moveth he might easily overtake the stone before it fell; or, it may be, standing still,

the earth speedily moving would carry him so far as to be under the stone when it should fall.

Use 2. To moderate our desires after the earth and earthly things, which we must leave behind us,

and cannot carry away with us, 1 Timothy 6:7–8; Psalm 49:1–7.

Use 3. To reprove our unstaidness to stand in good ways, though the word of God have been as well spoken to us as to the earth, which yet standeth according to his word, Jeremiah 5:22–23.

Use 4. To exhort to the building of our hopes of salvation upon God's word, which will establish them for ever when other grounds will fail us.

Verse 5. *The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.*

Verse 6. *The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirlleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.*

Verse 7. *All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.*

Verse 8. *All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it : the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.*

Verse 9. *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*

Verse 10. *Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.*

Verse 11. *There is no remembrance of former things ; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.*

Doctrine 1. The knowledge of such things as are full of labour, and empty of yielding satisfaction to the mind, and of variety or newness, is unprofitable to the attainment of true happiness.

This is the ground upon which Solomon buildeth the unprofitableness of the labour of the mind about the knowledge of natural things.

1. They are full of labour or restless motion, verse 8.
2. They yield no satisfying to the eye and ear, which are the senses of discipline.
 - (1.) The one by observation.
 - (2.) The other by instruction.
3. There is no newness or variety in them, which arguing would not hold unless this doctrine be presupposed as a ground.
Reason of it from the nature of such things wherein true blessedness standeth.

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They are such as—

1. Are at rest; he maketh it our safety to rest in peace and tranquillity, Isaiah 30:7,15; the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the fellowship of God's Spirit, the word of promise, the covenant of grace and peace. But natural things, which are themselves in perpetual motion, they leave our minds restless.

2. Do satisfy the mind and heart of a Christian. His eye would ever see the favour of God and the light of his countenance shining upon him, his ear would ever hear the things belonging to his peace.

The eye or ear not to be satisfied with such or such things, implieth either,

1. That a man careth not to see or hear any more of them, as having enough of them, and yet would have something besides them, as being not contented with them. So it is meant here, Isaiah 55:1,3.

But, on the contrary, in heavenly things, a man having true and full contentment in them yet desireth to partake more and more of them, John 4:14; Matthew 5:6; Psalm 42:1–2. For such things do yield true satisfaction to the eye and ear and taste, whenas a man is desirous always to see and hear and taste the same. And so is it in heavenly things—the more we taste of them, the more we desire them, and yet are fully satisfied and contented with them.

2. Secondly, That a man not having enough of that he seeth and heareth, would have more of it, and yet cannot attain it, and thereupon is vexed; as Aristotle, not fully comprehending the course of Euripus, is said to have cast himself into it: and so is it also meant here in sundry difficulties of natural things.

3. Thirdly, Are new, full of fresh and sweet variety of newness. To a new creature, behold all things become new, 2 Corinthians 5:17—not only

within him, new mind, new judgment, new conscience, new heart, new affections (new joys, fears, griefs, cares, desires, &c.), new speeches, new life; but also without him, new company, &c.

Yea, those things he busieth himself about they yield him continually new matter to be refreshed withal. The favour of God, the blood of Christ, the fellowship of the Spirit, the more they are heard or seen, the more novelty they are to us; the word, the,

oftener read, still yieldeth us more knowledge, new comfort, &c. Paul speaketh not of the estate of glory, but of grace, when he saith, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, such things', 1 Corinthians 2:9. The natural man never perceived them (and therefore, as Paul reasoneth, the princes of this world could not devise such things to keep people in awe). They are new when they are first perceived of the godly, and they feel a new, fresh, sweet savour in them as oft as the seeing or hearing of them is renewed, Lamentations 3:23.

Use 1. To wean us from placing our happiness in the study of the creatures. There is no rest in them, no satisfaction to the mind, no such newness as in those things wherein true happiness standeth. Some of the philosophers placed happiness in contemplation (meaning of the creatures), but showeth they were deceived. Many a man thinketh that if he could attain to the knowledge and mystery of this or that trade, he should need no more good; but it is even with trades as with the creatures: they are full of labour, and yet empty of satisfying the mind—empty of newness.

Use 2. To exhort to the study and searching out of the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the grace of his Spirit, the word of God, &c. These will answer our hearts with rest, and fullness, and newness of comfort and contentment.

Use 3. For trial of our happiness, whether we have made right choice of it. If we bend our studies and labours upon things that are full of labour, and yet empty of satisfying the mind with contentment and newness, we have misplaced our happiness.

But if we find rest and satisfaction and newness in the things we are conversant about, it is a sign we have chosen heavenly things to place our happiness in—a right choice.

From the sun's motion, verse 5, observe,

First (against Copernicus), That the sun standeth not still, but the earth, Psalm 19:5.

Secondly, Against the opinion of such that do think the heavens and planets are moved by intelligences. The same is here said to arise and go down, to hasten, not to be carried or moved passively, Psalm 19:5. The sun is said freely to run his course, or which is all one, to rejoice to run it.

Thirdly, The sun is endued with life, for whatsoever

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stirreth and moveth itself in his own place is quick and liveth.

There is a double life in things yet coming short of sense. 1. Vegetative, as the plants and herbs; 2. Locomotive, as in the stars.

This also is implied in the order of the works of the creation. Where, proceeding from things less perfect to things more perfect, he mentioneth stars made the fourth day, and herbs and trees the third.

The stars therefore, mentioned to be created after some living things, have in themselves a more perfect life.

From the wind's motions, verse 6, observe,

The freedom of the motion of God's Spirit, blowing where it listeth, John 3:8.

From the motion of the rivers, verse 7, observe, First, The original of fountains to spring from the sea.

Aristotle's reason to the contrary, that water coveteth to run to the lowest place—and if the water should have this vicissitude of course, from the fountains to the sea, from the sea to the fountains, then the same place should be higher and lower than itself—will not hold. For some parts of the sea are lower than the fountains, and into them the fountains send forth their streams to run; other parts of the sea are as high, or higher, than the fountains, especially in great storms, when the waves seem to ascend up to heaven, Psalm 107:26. And they by secret channels another way send forth springs of water to feed the fountains.

Plato's *Barathrum*, in the hollow caverns of the earth, which he maketh to be the original of fountains, is hence also refuted, unless he derive the supplying of that *Barathrum* from the sea.

Secondly, That the earth, through which the sea waters pass to the fountains, doth percolate and strain the salt out of them; else, as the sea-waters are salt, so would also the fountain-waters be.

That some fountains of water are salt as the sea ariseth from the openness of the pores of the earth between the sea and them, which is also the cause of the ebbing and flowing of some of them.

Thirdly, A pattern of thankful returning what we receive to the fountain that supplieth us; as we receive all blessings from God, so let us return all to him.

From the motion of all these together, observe,

First, That all the elements abhor idleness; the sun (the chariot of fire), the wind, the waters, are all in continual motion. And though the earth abide and stand, yet it is continually fruitful in breeding and nursing such things as abide upon it, and in it. An idle person, though made and fed of all these, is like none of these—he lazily sitting or lying still, whilst they continually move; diligence in our calling hindereth not the happiness of the resting of our hearts in God.

Verse 9. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Verse 10. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

Verse 11. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

In these words Solomon showeth us the want of newness in these things under the sun, and from thence argueth the unprofitableness of the study or knowledge of them to the attaining of true happiness.

This want of newness, first, Is expressed in the end of the ninth verse, ‘There is no new thing under the sun’; secondly, Is amplified, 1. By particular induction of that which hath been, and that which is done; they both shall be hereafter, verse 9.

Secondly, By an ἐπιμονή, dwelling upon the same point, affirming everything that now seems new to have been in old time, verse 10.

Thirdly, By removing an objection which is secretly implied: If these things that seem new to us have been in old time, how cometh it we never heard of them before? verse 11; which is amplified by the like forgetfulness of things now in after ages, verse 11.

The doctrine of the ninth and tenth verses may be opened in handling this point,

There is no new thing under the sun.

It may seem a paradox at first sight; for it may be said, What is that which all men, like the Athenians, inquire after; news? If there be no new thing, Acts 17:21, why are men taxed for hunting after new fashions in apparel? (especially Englishmen, as unfit to be suited as the changeable

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moon.) If there be no new thing, will God again destroy the world with water? Genesis 9:11. Was it a new thing for God to deliver the law with lively voice from heaven? Deuteronomy 4:32–33. Was it not a new thing, or shall it be again repeated, the sun to stand still, or to go back ten degrees? Joshua 10:13–14; 2 Kings 22:11; a virgin to bear a son? Jeremiah 31:22; Christ to be born, to die, to rise again, to ascend? the Holy Ghost to descend? the apostles to preach and write the New Testament? Are there not sundry inventions of art new? as guns, printing, and the use of the loadstone. Was not the gunpowder treason new, without precedent of former example?

To answer these, and such-like doubts, many interpretations and limitations of these words have been given, which are not worth the rehearsing; as that of Cajetan, conceiving Solomon to reason from the eternity of time, to argue the circular motion of natural bodies; and that alleged of Origen, touching Plato's great year, of 49,000 years, wherein he would have all the stars to come to the same position, and so all things to return again in the same course. But to touch only those which come nearer to the truth. Some have thought (amongst whom Jerome) that all things now done, were first in God's predestination; but though that be a truth, yet not pertinent here; for God's predestination is above the sun; and things done here according to it, are new still under the sun, as having never been done under the sun before; besides, God's predestination was not in old time before us, but before all time.

Others understand the words as denying new; arts; but what will they say of the art of printing?

Others, as Pineda, understand it of no new happiness, nor any new way to attain it.

But Solomon seemeth to speak of the want of new objects to eye and ear, whence it cometh to pass that they are not satisfied, verse 8.

Others, and that rightly, conceive him to speak of natural things, and their natural actions, *Avicen. Sup. Q. 91, A. 1.*

For of these Solomon here discourseth, to prove that happiness cannot be found in the knowledge of these, because they are wanting in newness and variety. As if he should say, *Natura nihil molitur*

novi. Though upon this particular occasion he seemeth to reach further, in denying newness to the common affairs of men in the world.

For, verse 11, he denieth remembrance of former things, which is not wont to be taken up about natural bodies, or the actions of them, but especially about men and their affairs.

And indeed in civil matters there be the like manners of men now as of old; the like causes and successes of war and peace, &c., whence the knowledge of history of former times is so much behoveful. So in church matters, like disposition of hypocrites, Matthew 15:8–9.

Like opposition to the truth by false teachers, 2 Timothy 3:8; 2 Peter 2:1; like security, forerunning general judgments, Luke 17:26–30.

Answer 1. For answer therefore to the former doubts, Solomon speaketh not of God's miraculous and extraordinary actions, whether of judgment or grace; such as the drowning of the world, the standing of the sun, the birth and death of Christ, the writing of the Scriptures, &c., 2 Peter 3:4–6.

Answer 2. He speaketh of natural bodies, and the whole course of nature. Nature worketh now as from the beginning, *Natura nihil molitur novi*, but upon some accidental defect, or superfluity in the matter.

Answer 3. The artificial inventions of men, though they be new sometimes at first, yet for the kind many of them have been before; and generally none of them continue new long, but wax stale and old like other things, Psalm 102:26; Hebrews 8:13.

Only God our happiness is always the same, Psalm 102:27; Hebrews 8:8, and ever is new. Abraham's covenant is still the new covenant.

Use 1. To show us the emptiness of the knowledge of the creature to bring us to happiness.

Where newness is wanting, sweetness and full contentment is wanting.

Use 2. To exhort to seek after the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the fellowship of his Spirit, the knowledge of the word, &c. These things yield a daily new freshness, 2 Corinthians 5:17; Lamentations 3:23.

Doctrine 2. Matters of former times are buried in forgetfulness.

Reason 1. Men's negligence to recount them, or to search after them.

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Reason 2. Men's unthankfulness, not rehearsing them to posterity.

Reason 3. Emulation, envying the propagation of others' good name.

Reason 4. God's just judgment cutting off the memory of some persons and things from off the earth.

Use 1. Not to wonder though so many things seem new to us, which yet have been before, seeing former things are forgotten.

Use 2. Not to seek our own glory in this or that good work, to be talked of when we are gone; for we and our works shall be forgotten.

Use 3. To exhort to godliness, which bringeth an everlasting good name, Proverbs 10:7; Psalm 112:6.

Verse 12. *I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.*

Verse 13. *And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.*

Verse 14. *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

Verse 15. *That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.*

Now followeth, in these verses, the second argument whereby Solomon proveth the vanity and unprofitableness of the study and knowledge of God's works in nature, to the attainment of happiness thereby, taken from his own experience. Where observe,

First, His study of the creatures; and that set forth,

1. By the opportunity he had thereto; he was then king over Israel in Jerusalem, verse 12.

It was not when he was a child, but when a king, and endued with extraordinary wisdom; yea, a king of a wise people, Deuteronomy 4:6; and in Jerusalem, the oracle of wisdom.

2. By the diligence he used therein; seen,

(1.) In the subject he employed in the study, his heart; *I gave my heart to it.*

(2.) In the act, seeking, *searching.*

(3.) In the instrument or guide he used, *by wisdom*.

(4.) In the object he was conversant about in those studies; I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom *concerning all things that are done under heaven*, to wit, all the works of God in nature.

3. By the calling he had thereto, verse 13.

Secondly, His verdict or sentence of all upon his study and search, 'All is vanity', verse 14.

Thirdly, The reason of such his sentence; the insufficiency of such knowledge to straighten things crooked, or to supply defects.

Doctrine 1. To study the nature and course and use of all God's works, is a duty imposed by God upon all sorts of men, from the king that sitteth upon the throne to the artificer.

This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men, even to kings also, verse 12–13; Proverbs 25:2.

Reason 1. God's glory, which is seen in the creatures, Psalm 19:1, and 145:10; Romans 1:20. It is a disgrace to a good workman not to look at his work, but to slight it.

Reason 2. Our own benefit; both of body for health, as in the knowledge of many medicinal things; and of soul for instruction, which may be learned from the creatures; and of the estate for gain, when we know the worth and use of each thing.

Use 1. To reprove the strait-heartedness of most, who study no further the creatures than for necessity or pastime. The gentleman only observeth so much of the nature of dogs, and hawks, and pheasants, and partridges, &c., as serveth for his game. The tradesman looketh onely at the nature and use of such things, as whereby he getteth his living, whether sheep, beasts, skins, wool, spices, fishes, fowl, &c.

But studying the nature of all things, which, by observation and conference, men might learn one of another, would enlarge our hearts to God, and our skill to usefulness to ourselves and others.

Rich men have more means, and poor men more vacancy, to seek and get this knowledge; how justly, then, are both reprov'd for wanting heart to it! Proverbs 17:16. Yea, scholars here are not to be excused who study only some general causes and properties of the creatures, as the principles of natural bodies, their motion, time, place, measure,

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&c., but neglect to apply their studies to the nature and use of all things under heaven.

Doctrine 2. Those businesses which God setteth us about, we are to set our hearts and best endeavours upon them. God laid this sore travail upon men; and Solomon gave his heart to seek and search, &c.

Reason 1. God's wholly we are, and therefore to employ our whole selves at his appointment.

Reason 2. His blessing is upon the industrious, his curse upon the negligent, Proverbs 10:4; Jeremiah 48:10.

Reason 3. All the opportunity we have of taking pains to any profitable use, is in this life, Ecclesiastes 9:10. Time spendeth fast, and should be redeemed, Ephesians 5:15–16.

Use. To reprove slackness and idleness in any calling, whether the study of nature or other. It is not for men to say they have nothing to do, or to stand idle, because no man hath hired them, Matthew 20:6–7. Behold a world of creatures for thee to study upon. If God lay a sore travail upon the sons of men, it is not for kings to neglect it, but even they to give their hearts this way.

Doctrine 3. Such as speak by experience, speak with authority, as Solomon here, verse 14; Acts 4:20.

Three things give authority to speech:—

1. Experience.
2. A good calling from God, Amos 7:10–17.
3. The Spirit of God, and we speaking in the evidence of it, 1 Corinthians 2:4; Acts 8:13; Matthew 7:29.

Use 1. To teach young men who want experience to be the more modest in speech, Job 32:6–7.

Use 2. To teach ministers especially to know by experience the power of the gospel and grace of God in themselves, and then teach it to others.

Doctrine 4. They that have best experience of the knowledge of the creature, find both the creatures and the knowledge of them vain and unprofitable to the attainment of happiness, yea, tending rather to the vexation of the spirit, verse 14.

For the philosophers, by the wisdom gathered from the creatures, knew not God in the wisdom of God—that is, in Christ, in whom alone our happiness is, 1 Corinthians 1:20–21.

Unprofitable to happiness, but rather yielding vexation.

1. Because they lead us not to happiness.

2. There lieth a curse upon the creature ever since the fall, Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:20.

3. Because of the difficulty of the searching out of many secrets in nature, as the cause of the sea's flowing, the motion of the moon, the loadstone's drawing of iron, and looking towards the north pole, sundry sympathies and antipathies of the creatures. It is said by some to be the death of Aristotle, that he could not comprehend the cause of Euripus seven times ebbing and flowing in a day: Because I cannot comprehend thee, saith he, thou shalt comprehend me; and so is said to have thrown himself into it.

4. Because the study of nature healeth not the sinful defects of nature in our own spirits, which is the reason Solomon rendereth, verse 15.

Use 1. To teach scholars and other students of nature so to study it, as not to place felicity in the creatures, or in the knowledge of them; they are vain and vexing if used to that end. Solomon doth not bring a causeless evil report upon the world, as the spies did upon Canaan.

Objection. But do not many scholars acknowledge they find great contentment, yea, sweetness in the study and knowledge of the creatures?

Answer 1. True, they may, if they use the creatures and the knowledge of them not to find happiness in them, but to those other ends for which God made them, mentioned in *Doctrine 1*, p. 15.

2. Though many think themselves happy by such speculations, it is because they cast not up their accounts, as Solomon here doth, to see what true reformation of their own perverseness, or supply of their defects, they have found thereby.

Use 2. To teach all men neither to satisfy themselves in such things as reach not to the healing the crookedness of their natures, nor to the supplying of the defects thereof. How vain, then, are they that see not the vanity of wealth, honour, pleasure, all earthly things, which are all of them short herein!

Doctrine 5. The crooked perverseness and sinful defects of our nature are not healed by the knowledge of God's works in nature.

A threefold crookedness is in our nature.

1. We act not from a right principle, from God in Christ, but from ourselves.

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2. We act not by a right rule, God's will and word.

3. For a right end, God's honour, but our own ends.

Defects also innumerable: first, In gifts; secondly, In acts, as in thoughts, words, and works.

Hence the philosophers themselves, as vicious as others in pride and vainglory, in wantonness, in covetousness, in flattery, &c.

Yea, they are more averse and backward to embrace the gospel than the common sort, Acts 17:18,32.

1. Natural bodies cannot reach to the healing of our souls.

2. The virtue of the creatures is finite, as themselves be; but it requireth an infinite power, even a new creation, to heal our crookedness, and to supply our defects, Psalm 51:10.

Use 1. To show us the depth of our corruption; no creature is able to make our crooked spirits straight, or to supply our defects, which are innumerable.

Use 2. To stir us up to the knowledge of Christ, whom to know is eternal life, John 17:3. He rectifies our crookedness, and supplies all our defects, John 1:16.

Verse 16. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

Verse 17. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

Verse 18. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

Solomon having taught us, partly by the nature of the creatures themselves, and partly by his own experience, that happiness is not to be found in the creatures,

He now proceedeth to inquire after happiness, in making trial and use of those blessings which God hath given him:

1. Great estate; 2. Great wisdom.

Which point he delivereth by declaring,

First, His communing with himself, what gifts he

had received, which were two: 1. Great wisdom; 2. Great estate;

Amplified, 1. *a minore*, 'Greater than any before him in Jerusalem'.

2. By the confirmation of it by his experience, verse 16.

Secondly, His making use of the benefit of both these gifts, and that by a phrase frequent in Scripture, 'I gave my heart to know wisdom', to wit, to know the worth of it by experience and search.

'And to know madness and folly', to wit, by experience; thus making use of his great estate to know the worth and benefit of sensual blessings, mentioned chapter 2 verse 1–10, which to do, in way of seeking happiness therein, he calleth madness and folly, verse 17, and chapter 2:3.

Thirdly, His observation of the worth of wisdom; verse 17, 'I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit'.

Fourthly, His reason of such his judgment upon observation taken, from the sorrow accompanying and following wisdom, verse 18.

Doctrine 1. Solomon, in his time, attained to great excellency, both of outward estate and inward wisdom.

His estate was great,

1. In wise princes and counsellors, 1 Kings 4:1–6, and 2:6.
2. In provision for his household, 1 Kings 4:7–19.
3. In multitude and peace of his subjects, and in largeness of dominion, 1 Kings 4:20–21, 24–25.
4. In beautiful¹ keeping, 1 Kings 4:22–23; compare this with that of Nehemiah 5:18.
5. In horses and chariots, 1 Kings 4:26, and 10:20.
6. In magnificent buildings, 1 Kings 6, 7:1–2, &c., and 9:17–19.
7. In abundance of wealth, 1 Kings 10:14–21; which he got,
 - (1.) By sea voyages, 1 Kings 9:26–28.
 - (2.) By merchandise in Egypt, 1 Kings 10:28–29.
 - (3.) By presents, 1 Kings 10:25.
 - (4.) By husbandly; for those officers that served his household every month were overseers of his herd and flocks and vineyards. This care he adviseth his son, Proverbs 27:23–27.

His wisdom was great.

¹ Query, 'bountiful'?—ED.

First, By the means of it.

1. From his youth up, by God's blessing in nature, 1 Kings 2:9.
2. Prayer, choosing it above all blessings, 1 Kings 3:9–12.
3. Experience, Ecclesiastes 1:16.

Secondly, In the effects of it, 1 Kings 4:32–33.

Thirdly, In comparison of all others, 1 Kings 4:29–31.

Fourthly, In the fame of it, and the use made of it, 1 Kings 4:34, and 10:1–17.

Reasons of these so great blessings given him of God:

1. The upright-heartedness of his father, 1 Samuel 13:14.
2. Because he was to be a type of Christ, who aboundeth in all riches and treasures of wisdom and blessedness, that of his fullness we might all receive supply of all our wants, John 1:16.

Use 1. To teach us the right and ready way to attain wealth and wisdom, and to procure it to our children; which are,

1. Upright-heartedness; giving up our wills to be guided by God's will; for that is a heart after God's heart.
2. Prayer for wisdom, above wealth or any other outward blessing, 1 Kings 3:11–13.
3. Just and honest dealing, without bribery or partiality. Solomon's throne was established by justice; he never wronged any.
4. A wise care reaching to the outmost corner of all our affairs.
5. Bountiful dispensing the talents we receive to the public good of others.

Use 2. To teach us not to rest in inward gifts or outward blessings, to preserve us from falling, but in humbleness of heart to depend upon Christ. Solomon with all these blessings fell fearfully.

Doctrine 2. It is the part of a wise Christian to consider within himself what inward and outward blessings he hath received.

Solomon communed with his own heart: Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom, &c., Psalm 126:3.

Reason 1. How shall we else be thankful to the Lord for the blessings we enjoy?

Reason 2. How shall we else employ the talents we have received to God's best advantage?

Use. To teach all men, especially great men, to follow Solomon's example herein. A steward that never setteth down his accounts, what he hath received of his lord's moneys, will never make a good account of the expense of it.

We must not be so brutish as the swine or other beasts, that eat what is given them, but never commune with their hearts what they have received.

Verse 17. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

Verse 18. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

Doctrine 1. To give a man's heart to knowledge is the way to obtain. 'I gave my heart to know', &c., and 'I perceived', &c.

Reason 1. From the heart's dominion or commanding power over the whole man. It setteth the senses a-work, to look about and listen; the mind to understand; the judgment to consider and observe; the memory to keep up whatsoever might make for the gaining of knowledge.

Reason 2. The heart set upon a thing will also deal with God about it, and neglect no other means.

Use 1. To teach students to give their hearts to knowledge; which is done—1. By esteeming it a singular thing; 2. By cleaving to it with earnest affection.

Use 2. To stir us up to seek the knowledge of that wisdom much more, the beginning whereof is the fear of the Lord. For if Solomon gave his heart here to the knowledge of that wisdom which is gotten by the knowledge of the creatures and human affairs, how much more should we give our hearts to the knowledge of the Creator and our Redeemer, whom to know is eternal life, John 17:3. Giving our hearts to this, we shall obtain even this also, Proverbs 23:26, and 2:2–5.

Doctrine 2. It is a wise man's part seriously to observe and consider what good he getteth by his own wisdom: verse 17, 'To know wisdom',—he meaneth, to know it experimentally, to know the worth and benefit of it.

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Reason 1. It is the part of wisdom to observe the goodness of everything—as knowledge observeth truth—and therefore it should not be wanting to observe the goodness of itself. The eye can see each thing but itself; but it is the glory of wisdom (the eye of the soul) to see itself with reflecting upon itself.

Reason 2. Else we shall take this talent in vain, if we do not consider what it is good for; otherwise we shall either undervalue it, or overvalue it.

Use. To reprove a common fault in scholars, who seek to gather more and more knowledge, but never consider what to do with it, or what use to put it to, or what themselves are the better for it.

All things but the last end, are no further good than as they lead to him; he only is good in himself and for himself. We need not consider what further good we get by him; to get him is abundantly good enough. To look at anything as good in itself, without looking further what it is good for, is to put it in the place of God, which is flat atheism.

Doctrine 3. To give ourselves to make use of our great estate according to the nature of it, will give us to know by experience madness and folly.

Solomon had observed (in verse 16) that God had given him a great estate and great wisdom. In this 17th verse he giveth his heart to know the use and benefit and worth of both; of wisdom first, and then of his great estate. Now instead of knowing the use and benefit of his great estate, he putteth it to know madness and folly; as if the giving of his heart to make use of it, were to lay hold on madness and folly. Thus he interpreteth himself, chapter 2:1–11.

Reason. To make use of our great estate, according to the nature of it, is to use it to erect great buildings; to plant vineyards, orchards, gardens; to provide a man's self of store of servants, costly apparel, rich furniture, gold and silver, musical instruments, as is shown verses 3–10 of chapter 2.

Now the benefit he had by the use of his great estate was madness and folly.

Madness is a privation of natural reason and natural affection.

Madness, in the original, implieth two things.

1. A fond delight in rejoicing and exalting a man's self; self-applauding.
2. A vainglorious boasting to others, even sometime

with loud clamours and cracking; celebrating a man's self, and affecting to be celebrated of others.

Both these are found to arise in a man's spirit, upon his fair buildings, sumptuous provision, and furniture, and attendance, goodly and pleasant gardens, orchards, &c., Daniel 4:30.

Folly is a dullness, and fondness or weakness (*Stupor senus in judicando*, Aquin. 2:2, Q. 46, Art. 2) the dullness of the understanding to judge and discern of things. So is it with every man employing his great estate in these rich and glorious matters; he shall find discerning and savouring of heavenly things much dulled.

Use 1. To call upon men of great estates to consider what good they get by their great estates, and their employment of them. If they employ them about great buildings, rich furniture, &c., as Solomon did, chapter 2:3–8, then consider if madness and folly be not their portion.

Use 2. If men's callings require the employment of their estates in sundry of these things, then it behoveth them especially to watch over themselves, lest madness and folly grow upon them.

Use 3. To exhort men of great estates to employ them not so much according to nature, which breedeth in the owners madness and folly, as in liberality to the poor, hospitality to strangers, maintenance of church and commonwealth, &c. So may we wisely lay up a good foundation for time to come, Luke 16:9; 1 Timothy 6:18–19.

Doctrine 4. Much wisdom bringeth with it much grief, sorrow, and vexation of spirit; and the more wisdom, the more grief.

The wisdom he here speaketh of, is an acquire wisdom—to wit, natural or civil wisdom, gotten from the observation of the creatures, or of human affairs.

Reason 1. From the means used for the getting of this wisdom, reading and meditation, which are weariness to the flesh, Ecclesiastes 12:12. Study heateth the brain, intendeth and stretcheth the mind, as if the body were stretched on the rack; yea, sometimes to the breaking of a man's wits. As in wrestling there is striving, then weariness, then despair of overcoming, then giving over, then taking it up again; so in study, again and again.

Reason 2. The curse of God upon the body of the

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creatures causeth that no use can be made of them, but with some sweat to the body, some grief and vexation to the spirit.

Reason 3. Envy and emulation in others, which breedeth a learned man disturbance, indignation, and vexation, and discontentment; in ourselves, that we are so much neglected, nor better respected than others of less eminency, as we conceive.

Reason 4. The more knowledge we attain, the more we see our own ignorance, which addeth much grief.

Reason 5. Much study drieth up the sweetest moisture in the body, whether blood or marrow; consumeth the cheerful spirits, and so breedeth morosity and harshness, which is a vexation to a man's self and others.¹

Reason 6. The vanity of this wisdom falling short of Christ and his grace, which is true wisdom, 1 Corinthians 1:21.

Use 1. To reprove a foolish conceit of ignorant people, that think ministers and scholars eat the bread of idleness, come easily by their living, &c. No calling more wasteth and grieveth him that is occupied therein than theirs doth. The ploughman's employment is a pastime to theirs; his labour strengtheneth his body, but theirs wasteth body and spirit; whence it is the one so long a time outliveth the other.

Use 2. To teach men to bear the more with scholars and wise men's weakness and morosity, they are incident to their callings.

Use 3. To teach wise men to see if this be not the fruit of their wisdom. If yea, then to seek after that wisdom which maketh blessed, and addeth no sorrow with it, Proverbs 3:17.

CHAPTER II.

Verse 1. *I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.*

Verse 2. *I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?*

From verse sixteen of the former chapter, Solomon hath tried what happiness might be found in his great

¹ Calvin desired the senate of Geneva to pardon his morosity.

wisdom; now he proceedeth to try what happiness might be found in his great estate, in the pleasures and profits which it yieldeth.

Parts, 5:

1. Solomon encourageth himself, in this soliloquy, to enjoy pleasure, verse 1, since he cannot find happiness in wisdom: 'Go to now, I will prove thee', &c.

2. He delivereth his judgment of it, verses 1-2; it is vanity, madness, good for nothing. What doth it?

3. He hath declared by particular induction the special delights he gave himself to take pleasure in.

(1.) In his diet, wine, verse 3.

(2.) In his buildings, verse 4.

(3.) In husbandry.

[1.] Planting of vineyards, and making gardens, orchards, pools of water, verse 6.

[2.] storing of cattle, verse 7.

(4.) Housekeeping.

[1.] Retinue, verse 7.

[2.] Wealth, verse 8.

(5.) Music, verse 8.

4. He amplifieth his enjoying of these.

(1.) By his joint laying hold of (diverse) wisdom, verse 3.

(2.) By the end he aimed at, in all his pleasure, verse 3.

(3.) *A minori*, he increased in these above all others, verse 9.

(4.) By adding all other things like these, verse 10.

(5.) By his solacing himself in them all, as being his portion, verse 10.

5. He relateth the issue hereof or event, which was that upon survey he found out all to be vanity, vexation, unprofitableness, verse 11.

Doctrine 1. Conference with ourselves in way of encouragement addeth strength and freedom to our resolutions and purposes, Luke 12:19; Psalm 43:5.

Reason 1. Words are as bellows, to blow up fervency and strength of spirit, as well in ourselves as in others.

Reason 2. They presuppose a judgment satisfied in the lawfulness and expediency of that we go about, out of the abundance whereof the mouth speaketh words of encouragement.

Use 1. To teach us to use this help to stir up our dull hearts, and to strengthen our feeble knees to any good duty, Psalm 27:6–7, &c.

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Use 2. To teach us to use the like conference with ourselves in way of discouragement from sins. The same breath that bloweth up fire cooleth hot water, Jeremiah 8:6; Genesis 39:9; Nehemiah 6:11; Psalm 4:4.

Doctrine 2. To give up ourselves to pleasure and laughter, to find happiness therein, is vanity, madness, unprofitableness.

Reason 1. There is emptiness in such mirth. In the midst of it the heart is sad; the end of it is heaviness, Proverbs 14:13; Isaiah 50:11; Ecclesiastes 7:6.

Reason 2. To frolic it in the midst of so many sins and dangers is not the part of a wise man, but of a madman rather, Daniel 5:7; James 4:9.

Use 1. To reprove the vanity and madness of epicurean gallants, voluptuous livers.

Use 2. To exhort us to believe Solomon's experience, who hath proved it to our hands, and not to place and seek happiness in mirth and jollity, Psalm 4:6–7.

Verse 3. I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

Verse 4. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

Verse 5. I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

Verse 6. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

Verse 7. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

Verse 8. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

Verse 9. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

Verse 10. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

Verse 11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

Doctrine 1. To give up a man's self to seek his chief joys and happiness in outward comforts and delights, is to take hold of folly.

Solomon, here seeking to give himself to wine, and great buildings and plantings, and gathering of wealth and cattle, as also to great retinue and music, to see what was the chief good thing of the sons of men, saith here of himself, he laid hold on folly, verse 3.

Reason. These outward delights deeply tasted of do dull and stupefy our minds to the discerning and relishing heavenly and spiritual comforts. And what is folly else but *stupor sensus in iudicando*? Proverbs 20:1, and 27:7; Hosea 4:11; Genesis 27:4. Isaac's affecting venison perverted his mind and will to divert the blessings of God and his own love from his better son to profane Esau.

Feeding of sweetmeats does take away the taste of our drink; so do these outward delights fed upon infatuate the soul to the disrelishing of the water of life.

Use 1. To show us how much more folly it is to give a man's self to seek pleasure in unlawful delights, as in drunkenness, whoredom, cards, dice, interludes, &c.

If all lawful fruits tasted on do not satisfy, how much less will it satisfy us, or bless us, to taste of the forbidden fruit?

Use 2. To wean us from placing our chiefest contentment even in these lawful profits and pleasures. It is but folly to set our hearts upon transitory, sensual blessings, which are but trifles in comparison of spiritual and eternal blessings.

Use 3. To stir us up to lay hold of eternal life; the favour of God; the pardon of sin; the grace of God's Spirit; the ways of obedience to God's commandments. This is as true wisdom as the contrary is folly.

Use 4. To watch over our spirits, lest they grow unsavoury, the more we enjoy outward sensual contentments and delights.

Doctrine 2. Wisdom may be held with the large seeking after delight in these outward things, but with much hazard.

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Solomon in the end almost lost himself in these sensual delights.

Reason 1. *Qui vadit per praeipitium, vergit in ruinam.* He that walketh in the uttermost extent of the borders of his Christian liberty will soon degenerate, and fall into some licentiousness.

Reason 2. The body, pampered with all contentments, kicketh against the spirit, Deuteronomy 32:15; 1 Corinthians 9:27.

Use 1. To discourage us from making like trial, as Solomon here did, whether man's chief good might be found in outward pleasures and profits. His wisdom was much hazarded in so doing—yea, blemished and eclipsed. How much less shall our less wisdom hold out in such trials.

Better is it for us to trust and believe Solomon's experience, than to try to our cost and danger as he did.

Solomon himself led himself into temptation by this course. If we will not be warned by his fall, our danger will be the more desperate.

Doctrine 3. God alloweth us to rejoice in these outward things (pleasures or profits), though not to seek or place our happiness in them.

Reason 1. It is the portion which God giveth a man of all his labour, verse 1,10,24,26.

Reason 2. It is a just ground, and good help and means, to stir up ourselves to the cheerful and thankful service of God, Deuteronomy 28:47.

Reason 3. It doth good like a medicine, healing some bodily infirmities, and strengthening to each good duty, and to freedom in it, Proverbs 17:22; Nehemiah 8:10.

Reason 4. *Hilaritas in Domino est indicium animi bene sibi conscii:* Godly cheerfulness is a token of a good conscience, Proverbs 15:15.

Use 1. To teach us not to defraud ourselves of such lawful delights as the Lord alloweth us, in the good things we enjoy; we shall do him and ourselves also injury in so doing.

Doctrine 4. He that shall take a just account and survey of all the happiness he getteth by his worldly profits and pleasures, shall find for his felicity, vanity; for tranquillity of mind, vexation of spirit; for advantage, no profit.

Reason 1. Of vanity.

1. God never sowed man's happiness in those J

outward things; how, then, shall we there reap it?

2. God's curse hath brought vanity upon the whole creature, and all the fruits of it, by reason of our sin, Romans 8:20.

Reason 2. Of vexation of spirit.

1. The delusion of our hopes, which we promised to ourselves by these outward things, must needs vex us.

2. The distemping of our bodies, but especially of our spirits, by these sensual delights, must needs grieve a good spirit.

Reason 3. Of no profit.

1. For in them we save not our souls, but rather lose them, Matthew 6:26.

Use 1. To teach men destitute of these things not to think themselves miserable for want of them; for they that have them are not thereby happy.

Use 2. To teach men that enjoy these things not to presume of more good to be found in them than there is in them. No happiness can be

in them; seek that in better things. He that looketh not for much from the creature shall never be much deceived.

If happiness could be found in outward worldly things, how could God be happy without the world, and before the world was made?

Verse 12. And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

Verse 13. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

Verse 14. The wise man' eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

Verse 15. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.

Verse 16. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man ? as the fool.

Verse 17. Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

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Solomon, having considered the vanity of wisdom and folly severally and apart, now cometh to consider of them jointly, in comparison one with another, whereof he rendereth the reason, verse 12, because no man had better experience of both of them than himself. His singular experience, though but of one man, may stand for a general observation, as if it had been proved by the experience of all men. He that should try these things after him should find no more in them than he had done.

Now, upon comparing of them together, he first preferreth wisdom above folly by a comparison,

1. Of light excelling darkness, verse 13.
2. Of sight excelling blindness; or of him whose eyes are in his head above him who walketh in darkness, verse 14.

Secondly, He equalleth wisdom and folly by the events happening to the fool and wise alike; whence he falleth,

1. Into an expostulation with himself, why he should then be more wise.

2. Into a resolution or acknowledgment of this vanity, befalling wisdom and wise men, which is to find the like event befalling themselves as fools, verse 15.

3. He expresseth in particular what these events be which fall equally upon both; to wit,

1. Both to be forgotten alike.

2. Both to die alike, verse 16.

The effect of which in himself he showeth to be hatred of his life, arising from the sense of the grievousness of this passage of God's work, together with the vanity and vexation of spirit which each thing yieldeth to him, verse 17.

Doctrine 1. He that will judge wisely and fully of things must consider of them, not only in themselves apart, but jointly also, in comparison one with another.

Thus wise Solomon, to give the more right sentence of wisdom and folly, doth not only consider them in their own worth and use apart (which, in case of placing happiness in either of them, he findeth to be vanity), but also he turneth his heart to consider them jointly, in comparison one with another.

Reason 1. It is the nature of a comparison to yield much illustration and light to the things compared,

which much helpeth the judgment to discern of both of them aright.

Reason 2. In comparing our good things with our betters, it helpeth to abate our pride.

Reason 3. In comparing the evils lying upon us with the greater evils lying upon others, it helpeth our contentment.

Use 1. To teach us to do the like in all such things whereof we would take a just estimate; as in conceiving aright of our wisdom, wealth, poverty, liberty, restraint, credit, discredit, husbands, wives, children, friends, neighbours, &c.; comparing them with the estates of others worse than our own, it will make us the better contented with our own portion; comparing them with the estates of others better than our own, will abate our pride.

Doctrine 2. It is for men of Solomon's worth to make Solomon's comparisons.

He knew, by God's own voice to him, that none should succeed him in wisdom and wealth, 1 Kings 3:12–13; and therefore he might safely compare his own singular experience of the worth of wisdom and wealth, honour and pleasure, with the experience of all that should come after him.

Reason 1. Unless a man do know his own eminency above all others' in the things whereof he maketh comparisons, he will appear no better than vain glorious, if not ridiculous. Campian challenging both the universities, though his cause had been as good as he presumed it to be, yet coming short of sundry learned men in the knowledge of the Greek tongue, exposed himself to just disgrace.

Goliath defying the whole host of Israel, and yet not knowing the eminency of the strength of faith above that of spear and shield, made himself a scorn and a prey.

Use 1. To reprove the insolency of boasting spirits, comparing and challenging many times their equals, if not betters, to their own shame in the end. Peter preferring himself before all men, fell worse than any of his fellows; Solomon excelling all, yet maketh comparisons but of equals here, verse 12,25.

Doctrine 3. It is not for any to hope to find more benefit by the use of wisdom, wealth, honour, pleasure, than Solomon did, verse 12.

By folly, Solomon means the enjoying of all sensual

comforts (whereof he spake, verses 1–11), such as wealth, honour, pleasure.

Reason, a majore. If he excelled all others in all these things, so far as any of them might be employed to any comfortable, or profitable, or honourable use, it is not for his inferiors in all or any of these, to find more good by them than he had done.

Use 1. To teach all men to content themselves with Solomon's experience, and not to look for more benefit in these things than he found. If he, seeking the chief good in them, found them all vanity and bitterness, we, in following his example, shall find no better success.

But the world will not herein believe Solomon, though he should arise from the dead, and report no less to them.

Doctrine 4. There is as much difference in wisdom above wealth, and such other sensual delights, as is in light above darkness, or in sight above blindness, verses 13–14.

Light excelleth darkness in sundry points.

Light is comfortable, stirring up to cheerfulness and boldness, Ecclesiastes 11:7; but darkness breedeth sadness and timorousness.

So wisdom maketh the face of a man to shine, Ecclesiastes 8:1; but sensual delights leave a man sad and timorous.

1. Light manifesteth things as they be, Ephesians 5:13; darkness hideth them.

2. Light distinguisheth one thing from another; darkness confoundeth all alike.

So wisdom discovereth clearly to us the true discernment of things; but voluptuousness overwhelmeth men with stupidity.

3. Light directeth a man in his way; but darkness misleadeth. So is it with wisdom,—it showeth a man his way; voluptuousness leadeth aside.

4. Light awakeneth us; but darkness lulleth asleep.

So doth wisdom stir up a man to his business; but voluptuousness lulleth a man asleep in laziness and security.

Sight excelleth blindness, as in all the things wherein light excelleth darkness (for the light of the body is the eye); so in these things. Besides,

1. Sight is an ornament to the body; blindness a

deformity. By it the body is, as it were, a living dungeon to the soul, without windows.

So is wisdom an ornament to the soul; but the voluptuous person burieth himself quick in obscurity and deformity, 1 Timothy 2:5–6.

2. Sight can discern light if it be showed to a man; but blindness maketh a man incapable of seeing light offered.

So wisdom apprehendeth counsel and instruction; but the voluptuous person is incapable of either, Hosea 4:11.

By the voluptuous person, I mean a man seeking happiness in sensual pleasure, whether arising from profit, honour, ease, or pastime, &c.

So Solomon himself understandeth himself, for he saith to himself, I will try thee with pleasure, chapter 2:1; he thereupon showeth what trial he took of pleasure in great and honourable works, profitable treasures, musical pastimes, &c.

Use 1. To teach us that men do not straightway condemn all such things, wherein yet they do not place happiness. Solomon will not admit happiness

to be found in wisdom (he meaneth natural or civil wisdom), and yet he acknowledgeth much excellency, and worth, and use of it.

Use 2. To stir up men to be studious of getting wisdom above wealth, profit, pleasure.

Use 3. To teach wise men and learned more contentment in knowledge, than other men take in wealth.

Doctrine 5. The same events, to die, and to be forgotten after death, befall both to the wise man and to the voluptuous epicure alike, Ecclesiastes 9:15.

Reason 1. The curse of God upon mankind is more powerful to kill and blast men, than wisdom, much less sensuality, can be to preserve their lives and memories.

Use 1. To stir up both wise men and voluptuous to prepare for death, and another life after this. Neither wealth nor wisdom can secure from death.

Doctrine 6. Such as employ themselves in getting wisdom and wealth, and other sensual comforts, to the intent to find happiness therein, shall in the end be weary of their wisdom and wealth, yea, even of their lives. Solomon here having so employed his life, in the end cometh to this, Why am I more wise? verse 15. And therefore I hated life, verse 17.

Reason 1. These things not yielding happiness, showeth us their vanity, and our vanity in seeking it in them.

Again, hope disappointed vexeth the spirit, Proverbs 13:12 (*a minori*).

Reason 2. God inflicteth a more special curse upon earthly blessings, when they are set up as *summum bonum* in his stead. God never more powerfully and disdainfully overthroweth Dagon, than when he is exalted with the spoils of his ark, 1 Samuel 5:2–4. So doth God then especially blast worldly comforts, when our heart is carried captive unto them.

Question. But whether did Solomon well to be weary of his life for this cause?

Answer. No; he should rather have been weary of his sin in seeking happiness in these things.

Life we are not to hate, but for Christ, Luke 14:26.

Use 1. To wean men from placing their happiness, as the world generally doth, in these outward blessings. Certainly as it was with Solomon, so shall it be with all such. They shall in the end be weary of all these things, and of themselves also.

Verse 18. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

Verse 19. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.

Verse 20. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

Verse 21. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.

Verse 22. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

Verse 23. For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

Solomon, in verse 17, told us one effect which the consideration of the like event in death to the wise and fool wrought in him, which was his hatred of life.

In this verse he addeth another effect of the same consideration, which was his hatred also of all his labour, verse 18; which he further amplifieth, first by two causes thereof, which show the like event befalling to the wise man in death as to the fool. Where

The first is, That he shall leave behind him all his labour, to wit, the great works he hath laboured in, to another that shall come after him, verse 18.

The second is, His uncertainty of his son's disposition, whether he will prove a wise man or a fool, verse 19.

Secondly, By the effect of the hatred of his labour: verse 20, 'Therefore,' saith he, 'I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour', &c.; which effect he further amplifieth by a double cause.

1. For that he having laboured in wisdom and knowledge and equity must leave the estate he hath so gotten to a man that hath taken no pains for wisdom, or knowledge, or equity, verse 21.

2. For that his labour hath yielded to himself nothing but sorrows, grief, restlessness, even in the night, verses 22–23.

Doctrine 1. When we labour for worldly comforts and blessings (such as wisdom, wealth, honour, and pleasure be) to the intent to seek happiness in them, we shall in the end come to see our labour lost, yea, become odious and wearisome to us.

For no man may expect to find more good by his labour after these things than Solomon did, yet this was the issue of all his labour so bestowed.

Reason. As of the former hatred of life, verse 17.

Question. Put whether did Solomon well, thus to hate his labour for not yielding him that fruit he expected?

Answer. No; for, 1. His labour was commanded of God, and was therefore good, Ecclesiastes 1:13; Genesis 3:19.

2. His labour had not been in vain if he had used it as God commanded: sundry blessings follow diligent labour, Proverbs 10:4, 14:23, and 22:29.

3. God never gave labour about earthly things that blessing as to yield felicity. It was Solomon's fault to look to reap that fruit from his labour which God never gave it. He should rather have hated the vanity of his own mind, which abused his labour to a wrong end. But Solomon doth well to tell us

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plainly how it fell out with him upon his labour so bestowed, that we may also see what we may expect in the like case.

Use 1. To teach scholars that labour for natural or civil wisdom, and other men that labour for wealth, or honour, or pleasure, not to expect or seek greater happiness in them than they are able to yield. If we do, we shall find our labour lost, yea, wearisome to us in the end.

These things we may labour for, but not as our chiefest good, but to some further higher end. If these things be the top of our hopes and desires, and the last end of our labour, we shall lose our labour and happiness both.

Objection. But do not many scholars that seek for no further happiness than learning and wisdom find good contentment therein, free from such hatred of their labours? And so do not many worldlings find the like in their wealth, &c., and never think their labour lost?

Answer. True; but such men never cast up their accounts, as Solomon here did, to see whether they have indeed found true cause of contentment,

true happiness indeed, in these things. If they had or did, doubtless they will find no better issue than Solomon had done, verse 12.

Doctrine 2. It is a wearisome and odious thing to seek happiness in those things which we must leave behind us; as Solomon was to leave all those great works behind him, which he had wrought by his great wisdom and wealth, together with all the comforts which they afforded him, 1 Timothy 6:7–8.

Reason 1. From the great need we stand in of happiness when we depart hence; yea, then have we most need of it; if otherwise then we fail of it, we become eternally miserable.

Use 1. To show the excellency of godly men above others; they carry the happiness with them which others leave behind them, Proverbs 12:26. When a worldly wealthy man hath made his will, and left all his estate to such and such, what hath he left himself to carry away with him but the anguish and misery of a guilty conscience, and the expectation of worse?

Use 2. To exhort therefore to labour more for godliness than all earthly blessings. It is, indeed, great gain which will go current in this world and

that which is to come, 1 Timothy 6:6, and 4:8. It is a great gain that bringeth God's blessing and no sorrow with it, Proverbs 10:22.

Doctrine 3. A wise man may have a son grown up to man's estate, and yet be uncertain what he will prove when he cometh to enjoy his father's living.

Solomon old was before he fell into idolatry, 1 Kings 11:4, and some years he must needs spend in building those temples to his wives' idols, after which time he wrote this book, so that now he was become very old. And therefore Rehoboam could not be young when he wrote it, for he wrote it not long before his death, and at his death Rehoboam was forty-one years old, 1 Kings 14:21. And yet Solomon, notwithstanding all his wisdom and deep insight into the nature of all the creatures, and into the manners of men, he was not able to say whether his son would become a wise man or a fool.

Reason 1. From the government of wise parents over their children, which keepeth them in from showing forth their own spirits: *Donec liberius vivendi sit copia adolescentulis, qui vitam scires aut ingenium nosceres; dum ætas, metus, magister prohibebant?*

Reason 2. From the change of outward estate, which often changeth inward conditions; *honores mutant mores.* sixtus, a humble, crouching

cardinal, but none so resolute and stout a pope; a cardinal of the Spanish faction, a pope against Spain.

Reason 3. From the various dispositions of some young men especially. Rehoboam himself sometime doth foolishly after his coming to the kingdom, 1 Kings 12:14; sometimes wisely, 2 Chronicles 11:5, to 12:13. If he were thus various after he came to the crown, how much more before!

Use 1. To teach youth to take notice of their own uncertainty of spirit, that they may more seek to be established with grace.

Use 2. To teach parents, as much as may be, to season their children with grace, and to teach them in the trade of the best ways especially; and then are they most likely to foresee their constancy, Proverbs 22:6.

Use 3. To exhort parents to train up their children, above all graces, to humility; for pride is the only sin for which God is wont to strike with madness, Daniel 4:30–32. That other cause of distraction,

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to wit, spiritual anguish through brokenness of spirit, Psalm 88:15, which Heman fell into, will not blemish reputation of wisdom, 1 Kings 4:31. God is wont to heal it.

Doctrine 4. It is a wearisome vanity, tending to make a man to despair of all his labours, a wise man and an honest man to leave his estate, either to an heir of whose wisdom he is uncertain, or to any who hath not laboured after wisdom and honesty, verses 19–21. This double vexation befell Solomon; first, He was uncertain what his son would prove—wise or foolish.

2. He saw for the present he took pains neither for wisdom, nor equity, or honesty, as himself had done; yea, it may be he also foresaw what loss of his estate might befall his son—ten parts of it to fall to Jeroboam, a man that made Israel to sin. And yet in Libanus, and other parts of Israel, Solomon had built much, 1 Kings 9:19.

Reason 1. For so a wise man is likely to be a drudge to a fool, an honest man to a wretch, a painful man to all idle.

Use 1. To wean wise men, and so all men, from voluptuousness, that is, from placing their happiness in earthly comforts. Otherwise it would never have thus vexed Solomon to have been uncertain of his heir.

For it would have contented him, and ought so to have done,

1. To have enjoyed the comfort of his own labour himself whilst he lived, Psalm 128:2.

2. To have employed them in his lifetime to the good of others.
3. To have trained up his heir with as much good education as he could.
4. To have disposed his estate at his death as wisely as he could.
5. To leave doubtful events to God, who disposeth of all things wisely and justly.

Use 2. To moderate men's eager pursuits after wealth. Little know we what manner of men we labour for.

Use 3. To reprove our carnal confidence, who think to make sure to leave our estates in a good hand, and there to abide from one time to another—a thing more than Solomon could foresee or provide for.

Use 4. To moderate our judgments when we see men's estates fall into the hands of foolish and prodigal heirs; not straight to think they were ill gotten. Solomon had laboured in equity as well as in wisdom, and got all his estate honestly; yet it was scattered (ten parts of it) in his son's days in the hands of a stranger.

Doctrine 5. To seek felicity in wealth and pleasure, &c., will put a man to continual grief and restlessness day and night, verses 22–23; 1 Timothy 6:10.

Riches and pleasures are as thorns, not only to choke good seed in us, Luke 8:14, but also to prick and pierce ourselves with many sorrows.

Reason 1. Their multitudes are a burden, Ecclesiastes 5:12. As many clothes on a man's bed will put him into a sweat, and not suffer him to sleep; so multitudes and abundance of wealth. For they carry with them many cares, fears, and uncertainties.

Use 1. To wean us from seeking such troublesome comforts. Labour we for riches, so as we may have them with God's blessing, which addeth no sorrow, Proverbs 10:22.

Use 2. To exhort to labour for spiritual treasure, which makes our sleeps sweet, and our days comfortable, Job 35:10; Psalm 77:6; Proverbs 15:15.

Verse 18. *Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.*

Verse 19. *And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.*

Verse 20. *Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.*

Verse 21. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.

Verse 22. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

Verse 23. For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea., his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

When Solomon saw that the exercise of his wisdom

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about the creatures, and his employment of all the creatures unto delight, which he calleth madness and folly, did neither of them satisfy his heart, but both of them alike yield him vanity and vexation of spirit; it gave him occasion to consider whether they were not both of them in comparison equal, or what excellency there was in the one above the other. And this he could as well as any undertake, because he excelled all men in wisdom, 1 Kings 4:30, and 3:12.

Doctrine 1. A wise man that shall compare together wisdom and folly—that is, the exercise of wisdom about the knowledge of the creatures, and the employment of a great estate to try what chief good there may be found in creature comforts—shall find as much excellency in wisdom above folly, as in light above darkness, in sight above blindness, verses 13–14.

See this opened and applied in the notes on pp. 25, 26.

Doctrine 2. Though the excellency of wisdom above folly be as great as the excellency of light above darkness, and of sight above blindness, yet one event happeneth both to the wise and foolish; which Solomon proveth by instances; both, 1. Die alike; 2. Are forgotten alike, verse 14–16.

Reason. From the condition of the creatures, they are temporal, and serve to support a temporal and mortal life; but when this life is ended, we leave them and they leave us.

Use 1. To teach wise men, and fools too, to prepare and provide for another life, and honourable remembrance after it by another course, than either wisdom or wealth.

Faith is the only way—1. To eternal life, John 11:25–26; 2. To honour, Hebrews 11:2.

Doctrine 3. To consider the like event befalling to the wise and to the foolish, it may breed in a wise man that exerciseth all his wisdom and labour about creatures and creature comforts deep discontentment, sadly to be weary both of his wisdom and of his life, and of all his labour, wherein he hath exercised his wisdom under the sun. Verse 15, 'Why was I then more wise'. Verse 17, 'Therefore I hated life'. Verse 18, 'Yea, I hated all my labour'. Verse 20, 'And I went about to cause my heart to despair of all my labour.'

Reason 1. From discerning the equality of the like event to himself as to the foolish,—to wit, 1. To die; 2. To be forgotten; 3. From the necessity of leaving all, verse 18; 4. From the uncertainty of the wisdom or folly of such to whom he shall leave it, verse 19, in likelihood to leave all to such as have not laboured in wisdom, knowledge, and equity, as Solomon left all to Rehoboam, who was foolish and weak, 1 Kings 12:8; 2 Chronicles 13:7. Jeroboam, who, though industrious, 1 Kings 11:28, yet laboured not in equity; 5. From the portion which a wise man reapeth of all his labours, to wit, sorrow, grief, restlessness by night, verse 22.

Question. But was it well done of Solomon thus to be discontented and weary of these good gifts of God—1. His wisdom; 2. His life, as well as of his labour?

Answer. No; but Solomon did well thus to confess his own distemper before the church, to let them and us all see what we shall get by employment of our wisdom and great estates to seek happiness in creature comforts.

To exercise our wisdom in the knowledge and study of the creatures. To employ them, or to teach others to employ them, in physic and chirurgery, it would never have made a man weary of it in that course. And in like sort to employ our great estate in due supportance and refreshment of ourselves, education of our families, maintenance of church and commonwealth, succour of poor widows and fatherless, as Job did, would never have made a man weary of his labour. But to try to seek what happiness might be found in all creature comforts, that is it which is vanity and vexation, and maketh a man weary of wisdom, life, labour, as if man should employ his wisdom (art and skill) in the secrets of nature, and lay out a great estate to find the philosopher's stone, what shall he find at length but cause to be weary of his wisdom, life, and labour so bestowed in vain?

Reason 2. From the curse of God upon wisdom, wealth, and labour, bestowed upon an end which God never ordained them unto.

Use 1. For a warning to scholars not to bless themselves in all the wisdom they get by the study of the creatures, nor in all the labour they take about that knowledge so as to make it their end to

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excel herein; but so to subordinate all to some of God's ends, that he may accept them and their labours, lest otherwise he make them weary of all through discontentment.

Use 2. To teach men of estates not to bless themselves in their great estates, nor in all the creature comforts they can get by them; it will at length leave them in deep discontentment.

Use 3. To teach us so to use our wisdom and estates, as the employment thereof, the fruit thereof, may not die with us, but may be carried along with us, Revelation 14:13. Then it will not grieve us, as it did Solomon, verse 18, to leave our labours behind us.

Use 4. To endeavour faithfully the good education of our children, that whether they prove wise or foolish, we may have comfort in our conscionable care of their good; and we, faithfully endeavouring their good, shall find God ordinarily blessing our endeavours so far to them, as we shall leave all behind us to them with comfort.

Versè 24. There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

Versè 25. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto , more than I?

Versè 26. For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

There is no good in man that he should eat and drink, &c., even this I saw that it was from the hand of God, &c. Solomon having said that man hath no portion out of his labours, but grief for his travail, verses 22–23, he here rendereth a reason of it, taken from the continent or efficient cause of goodness, which he saith is,

1. Not man; it is not in his power to reach it or give it.

2. But God; whatsoever good we receive, verse 24. Whereof he rendereth a double reason: 1. From his own experience, verse 25; himself was as able and ready to seek good in the creatures as any, and yet he could get no other good out of them, than as it

¹ Query, 'enjoyment',—Ed.

is said, verses 22–23. 2. From God's manner of dispensing these good things of this life, to wit, the wise and joyful use and benefit of them to the good man, the travail about them to heap them up to the sinner, and that also for the good man's use, verse 26, which argueth, that the finding of good by all our labours and travail is not in man's hand, but God's. Whereupon he addeth this usual *epiphonema*, that this also is vanity and vexation of spirit, verse 26. There is no good in man, or in the power of man; so I translate the words in the same sense as the same words are translated, chapter 3:12.

Doctrine 1. To enjoy any good by our labour, yea, so much as to eat or drink with comfort, is not in man's hand, but it is the gift of God, James 4:13–15; Ecclesiastes 3:12–13.

There is a threefold good which our souls might enjoy by our labours: 1. The having of the creature; 2. The use of it; 3. The benefit of that use.

None of these is in the power of our labours to attain unto: 1. Not the having of the creature itself, Ecclesiastes 9:11; Leviticus 26:19–20; Deuteronomy 8:17–18. 2. Nor the use of it either to ourselves, which may be intercepted, as the use of meat and drink, (1.) By sickness, Psalm 107:18; Job 33:20; (2.) By sadness, Psalm 42:3, 102:9, and 80:5; (3.) By sudden fears and dangers, 1 Samuel 30:16,27; 1 Kings 7:19–20; Psalm 78:30–31; (4.) By covetousness, Ecclesiastes 4:8, and 6:2; (5.) By scruple of conscience, Acts 10:13–14; or to others. 3. Nor the benefit of the use, which is cheerfulness and joy in it; the refreshing and nourishing which the creature might yield, Haggai 1:6; Acts 14:17. The benefit of doing good to others is acceptance; but that is of God too, Romans 15:31.

Reason 1. Since the fall, the good which God put into the creature, Genesis 1:31, is accursed to us for our sin, so that now labour and sorrow is all our portion from the creature, Genesis 17:19. 2. Goodness residing chiefly in God, is to be found in the creature only by participation, and that at his pleasure, Matthew 19:17. By Adam's fall goodness is devoted to the second Adam; to wit, the goodness of the creature, Hebrews 2:6–8; hence from him it is derived to us.

Use 1. To reprove, first, Confidence in ourselves for the getting of this or that good by any means

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we can use, James 4:13–15; secondly, Acknowledging the good we have to come from our own means, Habakkuk 1:16; Amos 6:13; thirdly, The abusing of meats and drinks and other creatures to vanity, riot, and mischief, &c. The gifts of God are to be used to his service and praise, Hosea 2:8–9.

Use 2. To exhort to look up unto God for the finding of good in all the means we use, and to acknowledge him in the attaining of it. The heathens did so to their false gods, how much more we to the true? Daniel 5:4. We thank our host for our good cheer, how much more should we thank God for it? 3. To teach us to look up to God, that we may find good in his ordinances especially; for spiritual and eternal good things are least of all in the power of the creature to give or to receive.

Doctrine 2. It is not for any man to look to find more benefit by his labours, or by the creatures gotten and used by him, than Solomon did.

Reason. No man knew the creatures better than he, nor how to use them to better purpose; neither can any man go about to get benefit by them more wisely or more seriously.

Use. To teach us to content ourselves with his experience. If he found no happiness by all his labours about the creature, if he found nothing by the creature but his labour for his travail, no more shall we, if we depend upon our labour, or upon the creature, or seek happiness in either.

Doctrine 3. God giveth to the godly wisdom, knowledge, and a cheerful use of the fruits of his labour, but to the wicked labour and drudgery for the benefit of the godly, verse 26. A man good in God's sight is here meant the godly, as opposed here to the sinner, Job 27:13, 16–17; Proverbs 28:8.

Reason 1. It is the end of God's predestination that all things befalling the wicked should redound to the glory of God's mercy towards the elect, Romans 9:22. 2. The godly, having Christ, have the world as theirs, and all the comforts of it, 1 Corinthians 3:21–23. 3. The godly, using the creatures and their own labours about them, in their right place and kind, reap that benefit from them which any way they can yield, Matthew 6:33. They in that way find the blessing of God, which exempts from sorrow, Proverbs 10:22. But the wicked, taking the creatures for their chief good, fall short of God, and of that good also from

the creatures, and their labours about them, which otherwise they might attain.

Objection. But doth it not oft fall out contrary, that the wicked have the world at will, and not so the godly? Job 21:7–13; Psalm 73:3–5, and 17:14.

Answer 1. It is so as Solomon speaketh here with many godly—they enjoy a wise and cheerful use of their labours and of the creatures; and, contrariwise, many wicked labour and toil, and that uncomfortably, for the good of the godly. 2. A little the righteous hath is better than great treasures of many wicked, Psalm 37:16; for (1.) The joy of hypocrites and worldlings is but for a moment, Job 20:5; Isaiah 50:11. (2.) Their prosperity is pernicious to them, Proverbs 1:32. (3.) The great estate of wicked men never resteth till it be devolved into the hands of the godly, but is meanwhile tossed as a tennis-ball from one hand to another, from one family to another.

Use. To exhort to godliness. The godly are good in God's sight; they have comfort of their labours. The wicked men's labours is also for their benefit and comfort.

Doctrine 4. The disappointment of a man's labour is a vanity and vexation of spirit, especially to such as seek for happiness in their labours about the creatures, verse 26.

Reason. It is a curse of God, Leviticus 26:16.

Use. To stir us up the more to godliness. Thereby we shall find good in our labours; or if we be disappointed, that also will work our further drawing near to God, Hosea 2:6–7.

CHAPTER III.

Verse 1. To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

Verse 2. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

Verse 3. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

Verse 4. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

Verses 5. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

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Verses 6. A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

Verses 7. A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

Verses 8. A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Verses 9. What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

To everything there is a limited term (or period), and a time to every will (or purpose) under the heaven, &c. Solomon having showed the vanity of all the creatures towards the attainment of felicity; and that, first, Partly by their own nature, chapter 1:1–11; secondly, Partly by the great experience and trial which himself had taken of them—both in, first, The knowledge and study of them, chapter 1:12–18; 2. The employment and improvement of them to sensual delights, chapter 2—he in this chapter (the former part of it) and these words showeth the vanity that lieth upon the estate and actions of men, by the vicissitude and variety of them, and that by the determined appointment and limitation of God's purpose and providence.

Parts of the words—first, An assertion that all things under heaven are subject to variety and vicissitude of changes, and that by the determinate appointment and limitation of God, verse 1–8; 2. A collection or inference of the unprofitableness of men's labours in regard thereof. The assertion he first delivereth in a general proposition, verse 1; secondly, He declareth and proveth it by an induction of twenty-eight particulars, verse 2–8. In the assertion, the word translated *season*, is a set or limited time or a determinate period; as the word is used for an appointed set time, Ezra 10:14; Nehemiah 10:34. And the meaning is not to show there is a fit season allowed us of God for all things done under heaven: for, first, That is not true; if it were, what is that to demonstrate the vanity or unprofitableness of men's labour about the creature, which is here the scope of Solomon? And when he saith, to every purpose, or, as it is in Hebrew, to every will, he meaneth, by a metonymy, to everything which a man willeth, or purposeth, or performeth. In the induction, the twenty-eight particulars

consist of fourteen pair of contraries, wherein a man changeth from one contrary estate

or course unto another: whereof the first pair is natural, to be born to die; secondly, The rest voluntary, and they are either, first, Private and domestical, as a time, 1. Of planting and pulling up; 2. Of breaking down and building; 3. Of weeping and laughing; 4. Of mourning and dancing; 5. Of casting away and gathering stones; 6. Of embracing and refraining; 7. Of getting and losing; 8. Of keeping and casting away; 9. Of rending and sewing; 10. Of silence and speech; 11. Of love and hatred. Secondly, Politic, as, 1. Of killing and healing; 2. Of war and peace.

Doctrine 1. The times that pass over us bring upon us many changes, yea, often from one contrary to another.

Doctrine 2. To every change that befallerth us, even to every state and business of men under heaven, there is a time limited and determined by God.

Doctrine 3. This change of men's estates, and the limitation of the times thereof, leaveth a man no profit by all his labour towards the attainment of happiness. But, for brevity sake, all these may be handled together.

Doctrine 1. As the main proposition of the text.

Doctrine 2. As the principal reason of it.

Doctrine 3. As the chief use of both.

For proof of the first doctrine, Psalm 30:5-7; Lamentations 1:1-2, and 4:1-2,7-8; Isaiah 1:21-22; John 21:18. The people sometimes cry Hosanna, sometimes Crucify; Peter sometimes maketh a glorious confession of Christ, sometimes a gross denial; Paul sometimes as an angel of God, Galatians 4:14, sometimes an enemy, Galatians 4:16. Nebuchadnezzar sometimes flourishing in his palace, sometimes grazing among the beasts, restored again.

Reason 1. From the determinate purpose of God to limit men's times and changes, Job 14:5, and 7:1; John 7:30, and 8:20; Luke 13:32-33, and 22:53; Acts 13:25-26; Psalm 31:15; Acts 17:26; Daniel 5:26. Grounds whereof; first, God's sovereignty over us, and so his dominion over our times, Acts 1:7. The heir, while under age, hath his time limited, Galatians 4:1. Secondly, God's faithfulness to us, Psalm 119:75. If our times were in our hands, we would never see ill times; if in Satan's hands, he would never suffer us to see good days. Thirdly, Our aptness to settle upon the

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lees, and to corrupt if not changed, Zephaniah 1:12; Jeremiah 48:11; Psalm 55:19. 2. From the contrary principles dwelling in us; whence variety, yea, contrariety of changes of carriage, Galatians 5:17. 3. From the instability of all the creatures, and their outward estates, by reason of the curse, Genesis 3:17; which though to the godly it be changed to a cross, yet the cross abideth to them, the curse to the wicked, 1 Kings 14:15.

Use 1. To wean us from fastening our hopes and desires after happiness in any estate here below, Matthew 6:19, 20; Proverbs 23:5; 1 John 2:15, 17. The unsettledness of all things here below demonstrateth their unprofitableness unto happiness. 2. To keep us from presuming of our own undertaking, and from possession of absolute purposes and promises, without subjection to the will of God, James 4:13-15; Luke 12:19, 23; Proverbs 27:1. 3. To moderate our mourning in hard times, and our rejoicings and confidences in good hours, Psalm 39:9, and 115:3; Micah 7:7-8; Psalm 30:6-7. 4. To stir us up to seek and wait for a settled mansion in heaven, Hebrews 13:14. 5. To take off the plea for dancing hence; for it is not said there is a lawful time to dance, but a limited time. Herodias' daughter, Salome, had a time to dance, as to earn half a kingdom for a dance, and to get John Baptist's head. So another time, of a contrary dance, when falling through the ice (if we may believe Nicephorus, lib. i. cap. 20) her feet capered under water, and her head being cut off by the ice, it danced above the ice.

We read, first, Of a religious dance, Exodus 15:20; secondly, Of a civil dance to entertain conquerors, Judges 11:44; 1 Samuel 18:6; Luke 15:25; when the eyes are set upon joy. But not in marriages, where is more temptation to lust. Tully pro Muræna! *Nemo saltat sobrius nisi forte insaniat, neque solitudine neque in convivio honesto et moderato*; especially it is unmeet in New England, and that now when the churches of England are in such distress, Ezekiel 21:10.

Verse 10. I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

Verse 11. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that

no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

Solomon in the former verses of this chapter argueth the vanity that lieth upon the estate and actions of men by reason of the vicissitude and variety of them, and that limited and determined by the appointment of God; and from thence he inferreth the vanity and unprofitableness of men's labours to seek for happiness in creature comforts, verse 1–9. Now, therefore, lest men should slightly pass over these varieties of changes that pass over them, and make no profitable use of them, as if they came by fortune or change, or God's neglect of the government of the world, Solomon here preacheth to us a fourfold profitable use and observation of them.

1. That God hath given this travail to the sons of men to exercise themselves in observing and finding out God's work in them all, verse 10; as, 1. Having made everything beautiful in his season; 2. Having put the world in the hearts of men, verse 11.

2. That whatsoever our estate be, we should not look to find the chief good in them, but be doing good with them, verses 12–13; and take such good from them as they afford, verses 12–13.

3. That these changes are wholly and unchangeably in God's hands, and aim at a gracious end, that men should fear before him, verse 14.

4. That there is to be observed a settled order in this variety of changes, as in the motions of the heavens, verse 15.

Doctrine. To consider and find out the work of God in all the variety of changes that by his appointment do pass over us, it is a travail given of God to exercise the sons of men. As in searching out the creatures, it was a travail given of God, Ecclesiastes 1:13; so here to search out the work of God in all changes that befalls us, Psalm 111:2–4.

Reason 1. From the beauty to be observed in every work of God—that is, in every change befalling us—in its season. To the beauty of the body there concur three things: 1. *ὀλοκληρία*, when no member is defective or superfluous, good constitution; every maim is a blemish, every superfluity is a deformity. 2. *συμμετρία partitum*, when one part is proportionable to another, and all suitable to their end and to their head, good proportion. 3. *ἔυχροία*,

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well-colouredness, or well-favouredness, good complexion. So in God's works about us there is, 1. A perfection, as in the creatures, Isaiah 40:26, so in his government of us, Deuteronomy 2:4; Isaiah 5:4. 2. A symmetry or proportion, first, Between the Lord and his work, 2 Timothy 2:13; Ezekiel 20:9, 14, 22. Secondly, Between his former and latter works, Judges 6:13–14. Thirdly, Between the instrument and the work God doth by it, *multum refert Davusne loquatur an herus*. Arrogant cruelty becometh Pharaoh; profane blasphemy, Rabshakeh; cursing, Shimei; treason, Judas, Isaiah 32:6, 8. Fourthly, Between God's dealings with us, and ours with him, Psalm 18:24–26. The wild-fire of lust in Sodom was punished with wild-fire and brimstone. So in destroying the Egyptians' first-born, Exodus 4:22–23; so in Nadab and Abihu; so in Adoni-bezek, Judges 1:6–7. 3. *εὐχροία*, well-favouredness. It is a beauty in the countenance: first, Cheerfulness; secondly, Lightsomeness. First, There is a cheerfulness in God's work at last, Genesis 45:7–8; James 5:11; Hebrews 12:11. They have a pleasant countenance, Psalm 92:4, and 58:10. Secondly, There is a lightsomeness in them, giving light and instruction, Psalm 107:43.

Reason 2. From God's putting the world into our hearts, verse 11; where by the world is meant, first, Not only the creatures, the world of them; secondly, But chiefly the world of changes of the creatures, of which Solomon here speaketh—'hath put the world into their hearts'—implieth that God hath put into our hearts, first, Some desire and delight to search and find out the work of God in all the changes that pass over us. So putting into the heart implieth desire and delight in a thing, Psalm 40:8. Secondly, Ability to do it, Jeremiah 31:33. Both together are expressed by that phrase, Revelation 17:17. The ground of which is our impotency and impossibility, without this putting the world into our hearts, that ever we should find out the work of God from beginning to the end, verse 11.

Use 1. To stir us up to observe and find out the work of God in every change of estate that passeth over us. It is else a brutishness in ourselves, Psalm 92:5–6; it is a dishonour to God and to his works, Isaiah 5:12; it is an enlargement of knowledge and favour from God to consider his works, Psalm 107:43. As when a good workman

seeth a man taken with his work, he is willing to show him all his art in it. 2. To teach us not to disparage, or slight, or dislike any of God's works, but to magnify them. They are every one beautiful in his season,

Job 36:24; Isaiah 45:9; Psalm 64:9. This magnifying of every work of God, as beautiful in his season, will keep us from discontentment and murmuring at God's providence, whatsoever it be that befalleth us or ours, Job 1:20; Psalm 39:9; 2 Kings 20:19. It may seem an uncomely thing to take fair and full clusters of sweet grapes, and to tread them and press them in a wine-press, to leave nothing in them but husks, till in the end you see what sweet wine is pressed out of them, which keepeth lively and sweet, when else the grapes left alone would be rotten.

Use 3. To teach us to improve and employ that knowledge of the world—that is, of all the changes that befall us in the world—which God hath put into our hearts, to find out the counsel and work of God therein. It was happiness to Esther in her advancement, Esther 4:14; to David in crosses, Psalm 119:67,71,75.

Objection. Yea, saith one, if I could spell out God's meaning in his works and dealings with myself and mine, it would give me great contentment.

Answer 1. In evils observe, first, What thou wast doing when a cross befell thee, Daniel 4:30–31; secondly, What conscience suggesteth to thee, Genesis 42:22; thirdly, The proportion of the affliction to thy sin, Judges 1:7; fourthly, Cast all idols out of thy heart, and inquire of the Lord his meaning, that thou mightest know it and do it, Psalm 25:9,12. God was long in answering Johanan and his company, even long after a Sabbath, because they sought in hypocrisy, Jeremiah 42:20.

2. In good things observe, first, The opportunities and advantages God putteth into our hands, according to his word, Esther 4:14; secondly, The great works God hath in hand; and derive your brooks to run into that stream, Jeremiah 45:4–5. Now God is advancing a reformation, pursue we that.

Verse 12. I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

Verse 13. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.

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I know good—that is, the good of man—is not in them. These words contain in them the second profitable observation which Solomon hath made of the variety of the changes of our creature-comforts and discomforts,

and employments about them; to wit, that the good of man is not to be found in changes of creature-conditions, and employments or labours about them, but to enjoy the good of them, and to do good with them; which he amplifieth by a twofold argument or reason.

Reason 1. From his own certain judgment or experience of them: 'I know that good is not in them', verse 12.

Reason 2. From the proper cause of any good or comfort that a man can either take himself or give to others by the creatures, or by his labour about them: 'it is the gift of God', verse 13.

Doctrine. The good of man is not to be found in the creatures; but it is from the gift of God to do good with them, or to enjoy the good of them. His meaning is not that there is no good in the creature, for that were contrary to Genesis 1:31; but that, 1. The chief good of man is not in them. 2. That it is not in themselves to minister their own good to us without the gift of God, Job 28:2-12, &c., to the end of the chapter, Ecclesiastes 2:24.

Reason 1. From the end of all the creatures, and of all their changes about man, and of our labours about them. They are all for us as their end, Psalm 115:16; Genesis 1:26; Deuteronomy 4:19, and therefore our good cannot lie in them; but their good rather lieth in us.

Reason 2. From our forfeiture of the good that is in them by the fall, that now the good in which they were created, 1. Is much impaired. 2. Is not yielded to us without a renewed gift from God, Genesis 3:17-19; which curse is increased by actual sin, Genesis 4:12; Isaiah 7:23-24; Leviticus 26:18-20; Hag. 1:6, and 2:16-17. 3. From the emptiness of our hearts to do any good, or to make any good use of what changes befall us, Hosea 14:8; John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 3:5. 4. From the prerogative of Christ, as to teach us to profit, Isaiah 48:17; God in covenant, the Holy One of Israel, our Redeemer.

Use 1. To set before us the frame of the spirit of a Christian penitent soul; it knoweth his good is not in the creature, nor in any creature comfort, nor in any creature changes, nor ill any creature labours.

Use 2. To look for no more from the creatures than is in them, and that way wherein we may get it out of them. Chief good is not in them; nor can they yield that good which is in them, but by the gift of God. With the gift of God, and by it, you may eat and drink, and rejoice in the enjoyment of the good of your labours, and do good to others in your lifetime by the creatures.

Use 3. To move men to repentance that have restrained the good of the creatures from themselves, Exodus 22:22–24; Jeremiah 5:24, 25.

Use 4. To seek and expect the good of any creature, or of our labour about it, by prayer and faith in the blood of Christ, Matthew 6:11; 1 Timothy 4:3–5.

Use 5. To stir up such to thankfulness as both take good and do good by all the changes that pass over them. It is God that worketh the power of the will to will, and the power of the whole man to do; and therefore we are to fear before him, Philippians 2:12–13, else a wise man may act foolishly, and a strong man weakly, in many fair opportunities.

Verse 14 .I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it , that men should fear before him.

Coherence, see in verses 10,15.

Doctrine. What God himself doeth, that taketh place in every age, without any addition to it, or taking aught from it by any creature.

The meaning of the words cannot be, that every work of God is everlasting; for no work of God is so, but the angels and souls of men, the highest heavens, and the bodies also of men after the resurrection. But whatsoever God doeth, that shall be for ever; to wit, it shall take place in every age. It is not (to wit, for the creature) to add to it; it is not to take away from it, Psalm 33:9–11; Ephesians 1:11; Job 23:13–14; Matthew 5:36, and 6:27; Proverbs 19:21 and 29:26; John 19:10–11. Some grant a general concourse of God's providence to everything done by the creature, seeing he sustaineth all things in their life, motion, being; but do not acknowledge a special concourse to the producing of each particular act, as inclining to it, and determining of it, unless the act be supernatural. But surely, as God inclineth and determineth the will by gifts of grace, by motions of the Spirit (exciting and enlarging

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the heart). and good objects unto spiritual acts; so doth he incline natural agents to natural acts by natural dispositions; and voluntary agents to moral and civil acts by moral and civil dispositions, motions, objects, Exodus 12:36; and casual agents to casual events, by casual occurrences.

Reason 1. From the nature of God. He is the first and universal cause, Ephesians 1:11; Revelation 1:8; Romans 11:36, and therefore concurrereth

to every effect. Adam, under God, is the first cause of all the sons and daughters of men, Acts 17:26; but he is not the cause of all their actions, for he produceth them voluntary agents; and therefore, what they do by choice of their own will, he is no cause of that, seeing he inclineth not, nor determineth their will to it, save only as he propagateth to them natural pravity. Thus, he was not the cause of Cain's murder of Abel, which is more plain in other parents; *causa causæ est causa causati*, holdeth in natural agents, not voluntary. But God is the first cause, not only of all causes, but of all effects: first, Of good things *per se*, James 1:17; Hosea 14:8. Secondly, Of evil things, by accident or occasion, Acts 4:27–28; 2 Samuel 12:11–12.

Reason 2. From the nature and condition of the creatures. They are all God's instruments, Hebrews 1:14; Isaiah 10:5, 15, and 44:28; Joel 2:25; Matthew 8:8–9.

Objection 1. The creatures may be said to be God's instruments, because he may and doth use them when he will, not that he doth always use them.

Answer. Yes; always, when they work at all. The devil himself, and all his instruments, are indeed but God's instruments. So faith beholdeth them, Job 1:21. Hence always God's ends are more fulfilled than the ends which the instruments aimed at, Genesis 45:7–8, with 37:20.

Objection 2. Hosea 8:4.

Answer. It is meant, not of his providence, see 1 Kings 12:24, but of his ordinance.

Objection 3. Zechariah 1:15.

Answer. They helped forward destruction beyond God's approbation, but not beyond his providence.

Objection 4. What need then of counsels, commandments, rewards, and punishments?

Answer. As if the wind need not blow, because a windmill cannot move but in and by the wind. These

commandments and counsels, &c., are the blasts by which God moveth us.

Objection 5. Thus you take away freewill from the creature, not only in acts of spiritual grace, but even in moral and civil actions.

Answer. No such matter; for God determineth all actions, not by imposing necessity upon the will, but by inclining it according to the nature and liberty of it; to wit,

1. In good actions, by, first, Infusing good gifts, Exodus 12:36; secondly, Exciting by good motions; thirdly, Propounding good objects.

2. In evil actions, by, first, Eliciting the evil within into outward act; first, By leaving to Satan, and to evil objects, John 13:2; secondly, By propounding good objects, Psalm 105:24–25. Secondly, Occasioning the choice of evil, as Adam's fall; first, Making the subjects mutual and declinable; secondly, Giving leave to instruments to tempt, as Satan in the serpent. Thirdly, By propounding objects: fair fruit, good name.

Use 1. To teach us to fear before the Lord, text; Philippians 2:12–13; Jeremiah 10:5–7. Our Saviour calleth us to 'fear him, that can cast both body and soul into hell', Luke 12:4–5; how much more to fear him that can cast both body and soul into sin, which is worse than hell, and yet himself most pure and holy in so doing, Isaiah 6:3,9–10.

Use 2. In God's fear to acknowledge him in all our ways, as those who can do nothing without him, and who worketh all our works for us, Proverbs 3:5–6; Psalm 57:2; Isaiah 26:12.

Use 3. To look higher than the creature in all things befalling us, which will train us up to, 1. Patience in evils. 2. Contentment in evils, Job 1:21; 2 Samuel 16:10; Psalm 39:9. 3. Thankfulness for that which is good, Genesis 33:10; Nehemiah 2:8; Ezra 7:27. 4. Fruitfulness, or making a good use of all occurrences, whether good or evil, befalling us. If God's hands be in everything, Surely good may be gathered out of it, Psalm 116:16; Amos 4:6,8,11. 5. Courage in all approaching danger; all our hairs are numbered; a sparrow falleth not to the ground without God, Matthew 10:29, 30.

Use 4. To teach us the vanity of all human endeavours and purposes without God, James 4:13–16.

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Verse 15. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

Coherence, see above, verses 10–11.

These words express the fourth observable thing in the changeable course of God's providence about the sons of men; to wit, that there is a settled order and constancy in that instability, as there is in the motions of the heavens and heavenly bodies. There is great variety of changes in the moon, yet great constancy in that variety; as it was in one month, so in another.

Solomon had such a like speech before, Ecclesiastes 1:9–10; but there he speaks of the works of creation or of nature, as spring, summer, autumn, winter, &c., but here he speaketh of the work of providence.

That which hath been is now, &c. Not that the same individual things shall return again, for dead men shall return no more into this world, Job 7:8–10; neither doth he speak of God's extraordinary and miraculous actions, whether of judgment or mercy, Exodus 10:14; Deuteronomy 4:32–33; Joshua 10:12–14; 2 Kings 20:11; nor of the rare and singular inventions of men, as of printing, or guns, &c. But he speaketh of the works of God's ordinary providence, in disposing of the variable changes of the estates and affairs of the sons of men: which though they be carried with great variety, yet are they carried also with great stability and correspondency, and suitableness one to another.

Doctrine 1. The former ways and works of God in disposing of the estates of the sons of men. God bringeth them about again from one-generation to another, 2 Peter 2:4–9; Romans 11:21; Jeremiah 7:12, 14; Psalm 48:8; 1 Corinthians 10:11. God's former dealings with the sons of men in former times are precedents of what he will do in after ages.

Reason 1. From God's nature, which is ever like itself, Hebrews 13:8, 10, 12, 28–29; Malachi 3:6. 2. From the correspondency of God's works to his word. Every work of God fulfilleth either some promise in the word, or some threatening; now the word is ever suitable to itself; so is God's work. The examples of God's dealings in Scripture would be of no use to us, if they were not precedents and patterns of the like to be performed in like cases in after times, 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 11:21; Joshua

1:5; with Hebrews 13:5; James 5:11, and verses 17–18.

Use 1. Against Manichees, who think one God to have governed in the Old Testament, another in the New. But the suitable carriage of all things now, as then, argueth the same hand to rule both then and now, Hebrews 12:29. It is also a refutation of fortune; for fortune is not stable, nor keepeth any certain or proportionable course. 2. To lend both comfort and stay, and warning also, to God's people, from the course of God's providence to his people of old, Psalm 22:4–5, and 77:10–11; yea, from God's former dealings with ourselves, Psalm 77:6; 1 Samuel 17:34–37; warning also, Hebrews 12:28–29; Psalm 99:6–8. Beware of breaches in general course;¹ it will presage and produce like effects, as breach of parliaments hath done in England. 3. To threaten to wicked men like

judgments which have befallen others for like sins in former ages, Daniel 5:18–28; 2 Peter 2:4–9; Jude 11; Job 4:8. 4. To teach the children of God to persevere in like constancy, and to keep a holy correspondency in all their actions and courses, that we may be like to our heavenly Father.

Verse 16. And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.

Verse 17. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

In the former part of the chapter Solomon showed the vanity of the estates of men, by an argument taken from the changes and vicissitude which the determinate hand and providence of God did put upon them. In these verses he observeth and declareth another vanity that befallerth our estates by the hand and government of magistrates; yea, a vanity that befallerth upon judgment-seats themselves. The vanity is wickedness, which is both, first, Ungodliness, 2 Samuel 22:22; secondly, Unrighteousness, Isaiah 58:4,9. And lest this vanity should cast some blemish upon the wise and just providence of God (whereof penitent souls are more tender) he declareth his resolution of that doubt, what it was in his own heart, that God will judge

¹ Query, 'Courts'? viz., church-courts.—ED.

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righteously, and so reform all the iniquity of judgment-seats; and this he proveth by a principle delivered in verse 1 of this chapter, taken from the time appointed for every purpose and every work there, verse 17.

Doctrine 1. He that shall live in the best times of the best commonwealths, may see seats of judgments and justice corrupted with wickedness and iniquity. The word *wickedness* signifieth both, first, Ungodliness, 2 Samuel 22:29; secondly, Unrighteousness, or iniquity, Isaiah 58:4,6. Solomon speaketh not of markets, or taverns, or stews, or mountains of prey (Standgate Hole, Shooter's Hill, Blackheath, Salisbury Plain, &c.), but of seats of law and justice; and that not in the reign of wicked tyrants, Saul, Ahab, Jezebel, or the like, but in the times wherein himself lived, which were the best which the best commonwealth, the commonwealth of Israel, ever saw, even the times of David and Solomon. In David's time, 2 Samuel 19:24–30, with 16:4; in his time, and Solomon's, Ecclesiastes 10:5–7; 1

Kings 11:6–8, and 12:4; in Asa's time, 2 Chronicles 16:10; in Jehoshaphat's, 2 Chronicles 18:1, and 20:33–37; in Uzziah's and Jotham's, Isaiah 1:21–23, 5:7, and 3:12, 15; in Hezekiah's, Micah 7:3–4, and 3:9–12, with Jeremiah 26:18; in Josiah's, Zephaniah 1:1, 9, and 3:1, 3.

Reason 1. Acceptance of persons; in the princes promoting their kinsmen or friends, though unworthy, to judgment seats, as Samuel promoted his sons, 1 Samuel 8:1, 3.

Reason 2. Misinformation, and receiving it without hearing both parties speak, 2 Samuel 16:1–4, with chapter 19:26, 29.

Reason 3. Wicked servants or counsellors about a prince, Proverbs 25:4, 5; 1 Kings 12:8–11.

Reason 4. Self-sufficiency, leaning to a man's own wisdom, Joshua 14:15; Proverbs 3:5–7.

Reason 5. Bribes or gifts, 1 Samuel 8:3; Exodus 23:8; Proverbs 28:21.

Use 1. To teach us not to wonder, if we find sometime the like errors here in our courts. We are to humble ourselves for the sins of our courts, Isaiah 59:14–16; 2 Chronicles 19:10. It maybe every one will not judge it an iniquity to fine the injury of twenty pounds, at two hundred; we read of restoration twofold, fourfold, sevenfold, but never one hundredfold. But is it not a wickedness to

suffer blasphemy to pass unpunished, and sodomitical rapes? What will become of rigour without mercy, is yet unknown.

Use 2. To teach men of places first, Not to affect seats of justice; they will not secure them. Secondly, To prevent these errors: which is done by, 1. God's fear, 2 Chronicles 19:6–7; 2. Not judging by the hearing of the ear, Isaiah 11:3–4, unless both ears be open; 3. Rejection of gifts, Isaiah 33:15.

Use 3. To refute the pope's infallibility of judgment; for he hath not such a promise of infallibility, as the king hath, Proverbs 16:10.

Use 4. To moderate men's eagerness to suits-at-law.

Objection. Why, may I not sue for my right?

Answer. But can you tell that you shall attain your right by suit?

Use 5. To teach us private censurers may err much more, who have not received like promises.

Doctrine 2. God will find a time to judge both the righteous and wicked, with every purpose (or will) and every work, verse 17. Not only at the last judgment, Matthew 12:36; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Ecclesiastes 12:14; but

even in this life, Proverbs 11:31; Psalm 9:4, 12, 16, 7:11–16, and 76:9–10; Exodus 22:22–24.

Reason 1. The glory of God, Psalm 9:16, and 50:26.

Reason 2. The restraint and check of the rage and pride of men, Psalm 9:20.

Reason 3. The groans, and sighs, and expectation of the poor afflicted, Psalm 12:5, and 9:18.

Use 1. To exhort to watchfulness in judgment-seats, and against all secret unrighteousness, Ecclesiastes 12:14.

Use 2. To exhort to quietness of spirit, when wrong judgment proceedeth, Ecclesiastes 5:8.

Verse 18. *I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.*

Verse 19. *For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.*

Verse 20. *All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.*

Verse 21. *Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth*

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upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

Verse 22. *Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?*

Solomon, having observed a vanity that befalleth the estates of men—first, By the overruling providence of God limiting all their changes, verses 1–14; secondly, By the hand and government of courts of justice over other men, verses 16–17. Lest this should reflect any dishonour upon the providence of God, whereby he governeth all things in the world wisely, righteously, holily, he taketh up and giveth himself and others a twofold satisfaction in this point, from a twofold meditation: 1. From the order which God will take to redress all the iniquities of courts of justice, both in this and in another world, verse 17. 2. From the end which God

aimeth at in leaving of courts of justice to such iniquity, which is double: first, God doth it to try them; secondly, He doth it to let them see they are as beasts one to another, verse 18. And to convince them the more of this latter, that men be but beasts, he argueth it not only from their usage of one another as beasts, but from sundry events common to them with beasts; that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts, to both alike. Which he argueth, first, for their bodies, in three particulars: 1. In the likeness of their deaths; as one dieth, so dieth the other. 2. In the likeness of their breath; they have all one breath, verse 19. 3. In their burial and resolution of their bodies; all turn to the dust, as they came from it. Secondly, For the soul or spirit of man which goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward; this difference is not known or acknowledged, discerned or considered, by men generally—to wit, not by natural men at all, verse 21. From whence he taketh this corollary, that seeing a man can take so little comfort or contentment in the estate or course of other men, therefore so to live as a man may rejoice in his own works, verse 22: which he proveth, first, from the propriety he hath in that course—it is his portion; secondly, From the impossibility to know what shall be after him, verse 22, or from his uncertainty of future events. To gather up all the points here delivered into a narrow room, all may be com

prised in one note of doctrine; the reasons thereof, and the uses thereof also, let us handle them.

Doctrine 1. He that shall ponder in his heart, and consider the estate of the sons of men, shall find that God would have men to say they are as beasts, verses 18–19. That which Solomon, upon serious pondering in his heart the estates of the sons of men, did resolve and say, that God doth this or that about them, that they might see themselves to be as beasts, the same another Christian, pondering the matter in his heart, may discern, resolve it, and say it, Psalm 49:12,20, and 73:32; Proverbs 30:2, 'More brutish than any man', which implieth that, first, All men are brutish; secondly, He more than others. When God will clear it to Peter that he might converse with all sorts of men, he shows him in a vision that God would have him eat of all beasts, Acts 10:12–13,28.

Reason 1. From the violent and fraudulent and beastly oppression of men in authority over the poor people, Proverbs 28:15; Zephaniah 3:3; Luke 13:32; Psalm 10:9; Daniel 7:4–7; Ezekiel 21:31; Genesis 10:9; 1 Samuel 26:20.

Reason 2. From the like occurrences or events befalling their outward man or body in their, first, Lives; both alike subject to hunger, cold, heats, labour, weariness, sickness, pains—yea, man's body more subject to these than the beast's. Secondly, Deaths; both mortal alike, whether, 1. By a natural death; 2. By a violent death, as hanging, drowning, stoning, burning, stabbing, &c.; 3. Burials, first, Both alike resolved to dust as they come from it, excepting some specially privileged, as Christ, Enoch, Elijah; secondly, Both subject to base contempt, Jeremiah 22:19.

Reason 3. From men's prostituting of their souls to like or worse conditions than that of the souls of beasts, who, of all the sons of men, in an estate of vanity (or nature), considereth or knoweth that is, acknowledgeth—the difference of his soul which goeth upwards, from the soul of the beast which goeth downwards? For men cleave to earthly things to maintain this life, as do the beasts; both alike follow their sensual appetites. Immortal food and raiment of the soul is generally neglected. The immortal soul cannot feed upon bodily meats and drinks, nor be satisfied with silver or gold, but with

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the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the gifts of the Spirit, the ordinances of God, communion of saints, &c., all which are neglected.

Use 1. To teach us to look at magistrates and courts of justice as set up of God for trial of men, as well as for other ends. To try, first, Magistrates themselves—*Magistratus indicat virum*. Place of government trieth the spirit of a man, whether it be just or corrupt, liberal or covetous, valiant or fearful, for God or for man. Secondly, Subjects, Proverbs 28:12—for *hidden*, read *tried* or *searched*, as Proverbs 20:27; Genesis 44:12. Subjects tried in their—1. Faith, Hebrews 11:36; 1 Peter 4:12. 2. Patience, Luke 21:19. 3. Obedience, Acts 4:19. Let magistrates look at their places as furnaces to try them. Let people look at magistrates, especially unjust ones, as sent of God to try them.

Use 2. To teach all self-debasement. Magistrates, when they prove unjust, rule over the people as beasts, and all the people naturally live as beasts that perish, labouring for the meat that perisheth; and so for perishing raiment, honour, pleasure, and profit. Ever since we affected to become as gods, Genesis 3:5, we fell to be like the beasts, whence God clothed our parents fallen with the skins of beasts, Genesis 3:21. Yea, our bravest clothing is with webs of silk-worms, as, 1. Expressing whom we are like,

Job 25:6; 2. Presaging what we shall one day be covered with, Job 17:14, and 21:26.

Use 3. To stir us up to consider better of our souls, and to make better provision for them, lest we live and die like beasts, Job 6:27.

Use 4. To refute the popish opinion of *limbus patrum*, which they place in the earth beneath, *Bellar. de Pergat.*, lib. ii. cap. 6. But here we see the souls of men before Christ's resurrection went upward.

Use 5. To teach us so to live as we may rejoice in our works. There is little comfort in living like beasts that perish, but there is rejoicing in a Christian course, Isaiah 6:4–5; 2 Corinthians 1:12.

Motives. First, It is our portion, Ecclesiastes 3:22, as that which, 1. Maintaineth us with necessaries, conveniences, and delights for the present, Proverbs 16:8. 2. Maketh up all other losses and crosses, Acts 20:23–24; Psalm 73:26. 3. Maketh provision for another world, 1 Timothy 6:17–19; Luke 16:9, and 12:33.

Secondly, Uncertainty of future events. If we leave our good works to be done by our last wills and testaments, it is uncertain how they may be fulfilled.

CHAPTER IV.

Versè 1. So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.

Versè 2. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.

Versè 3. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

In this chapter Solomon proceedeth to declare other vanities that befall the estates of the sons of men in this world, over and besides the vanity which befell them either by the just and wise government of God's providence, or by the unjust administration of men's government or judgment-seats. In the estates of men do arise the vanities here observed: first, From the neglect of compassion to men oppressed, verses 1–3; secondly, From envy, verse 4; thirdly, From idleness, verse 5–6; fourthly,

From covetousness, verses 7–8; fifthly, From solitariness, verses 9–12; sixthly, From wilfulness, verses 13–16. Solomon, turning his mind from considering former vanities, and now considering oppressions, he fasteneth his thoughts chiefly upon the sad and pitiful estate of men oppressed.

This estate is set forth, first, By their adjunct, want of comfort or succour: 'And they had no comforter', twice repeated. Secondly, By the contrary strength and store of power in their oppressors, so great that some translate that the oppressed had no power of escaping from it, and the words may bear both, verse 1. Thirdly, By the effect which then it wrought in himself: to wit, to praise, 1. The dead above the living, verse 2; 2. The unborn above the other, verse 3.

Doctrine 1. It is a vanity that befalleth the estates of men under the sun, that men of power abuse it to oppression; and a further vanity that men oppressed, though lamentably oppressed, yet have no

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comforter; and yet a further vanity, that a wise man, even a godly wise man, considering this, is subject to wax weary of his life, Micah 2; verse 1–2; 1 Kings 21:7; Psalm 58:2; yea, Moses the meekest on earth, Numbers 12:3.

Reason of abusing the power: first, The power of corrupt nature, which will have a time to put forth itself to the utmost, Jeremiah 3:5; secondly, Folly and arrogance joined with power, 1 Kings 12:10–11.

Reason of no comforter: first, Neglect of God's fear, Job 6:14; secondly, Fear of men, 1 Samuel 23:11–12; thirdly, The strength of God's wrath, who, when he chasteneth, he will suffer none to help, Job 9:13, and 34:29; Psalm 88:18, with 38:11; fourthly, Contempt of men cast down, Job 12:5; fifthly, Sensuality, Amos 6:4–6; sixthly, Inhumanity, Luke 10:30–32; seventhly, Scruple of conscience, through difference of religion, John 4:7, 9; Luke 9:52, 53.

Reason of wise men's weariness of life to behold or feel this: first, Distemper of their minds, Ecclesiastes 7:7, through, 1. Judging of things according to sense, not according to faith; 2. Doubt of God's providence in temptation; 3. Impatience, Luke 21:19. Secondly, Depth and tenderness of compassion and zeal, which maketh them utterly unwilling to behold the violence of oppressors through zeal, Habakkuk 1:2, 12–13, and tears of the oppressed through compassion, Habakkuk 1:3; Jeremiah 9:1–2.

Use of the abuse of power to oppression: first, To behold the vanity of all estates by the fall. Power, which was given to help the afflicted, is

abused to crush them; thus greater men, as fishes, devour the less, Habakkuk 1:14. Secondly, To warn men of power to beware of the abuse.

Use of no comforter: 1. To teach all men oppressed to seek first to make their peace with God; for if he be angry, the strong helpers fail, Job 9:13, and 34:29; secondly, To teach such as behold the tears of the afflicted, to cast out such corruptions and temptations as might hinder our compassion, as these before spoken of—neglect of God’s fear, fear of men, contempt, sensuality, inhumanity, scruple of conscience, Hebrews 13:3; Galatians 6:10; Luke 10:33–37.

Question. How may I know when God calleth me to succour and comfort a man afflicted or oppressed?

Answer. When three things concur: 1. His necessity, a Job 31:19, and 29:12,17; 2. My ability, Proverbs 3:27–28; 3. God offering opportunity, Luke 10:33; Galatians 6:10.

Use of the wise man’s weariness of life to behold this: first, To teach godly wise men to beware of a snare in the best virtues. It is a gracious and precious virtue, tenderness of compassion to men of misery; and yet the beholding of men in misery may breed in the wisest a discontentment and weariness of life. Secondly, To teach us in such a case rather to live by faith in suffering oppression ourselves, Hebrews 10:34, or beholding the afflictions of others, Ecclesiastes 5:8.

Use of all the three parts of the doctrine. If men of power be apt to abuse their power to oppression, and men oppressed do often find no comforter, and that a wise good man, considering this, be subject to wax weary of his life, then it may teach us to be compassionate and succourful to the oppressed. This may heal and prevent the two latter vanities, and remove the first, Job 6:14, 19:21, and 29:25; Luke 10:33; 1 Peter 3:8; Romans 12:15, Psalm 72:4.

Motives. First, God’s example, 2 Corinthians 7:6; Psalm 146:7, and 145:8–9; and his example is of necessary imitation in such cases, Matthew 18:33; Proverbs 12:10; Exodus 23:5. Secondly, Danger upon neglect of it: 1. From God, Exodus 22:22–24; Lamentations 2:13; Amos 6:6–7; Psalm 109:12; 2. From conscience, Genesis 42:21–22, or else searedness or hardness contracted after softness by God’s just judgment; 3. From man, 1 Samuel 12:5–7; Psalm 72:4. Thirdly, Community of condition, Hebrews 13:3; Job 3:13–15.

Application. 1. To the prisoner to help his conscience to sight and sense of his sins, and so to repentance.¹ His servant was diseased with the

scurvy, which maketh the body weak and lifeless; and when nature is grown weak, the retentive faculty is weakened that he hath no hold of his excrements.

¹ It would appear that a sentence has been dropped from the text. The description is of severities inflicted on a slave by his master, who caused his death, and pleaded that he intended his reformation.—ED.

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In this case compassion would have looked out healing medicines, wholesome diet, warm keeping; what compassion was there in immoderate whipping? It is Egyptian cruelty, Exodus 5:7–8, 14. 2. Striking on the head with a cudgel, leaving wounds and bruises. 3. Diet with the lights of a dead beast. 4. Washing his naked body in cold water, when ice and snow lay upon the ground, and putting on a cold and wet shirt, and kept out from fire. 5. Hanging him over the fire in the smoke. 6. Binding him on horseback, and he not being able to sit, fell on one side till blood issued at mouth, nose, and ears; denying him a draught of water; upon this he dieth.

Objection. But his intention was not to hurt him, at least mortally, but to reform him.

Answer. Sundry of these acts are not intended of God for reformation, as such diet, washing in cold water, wet apparel, and then kept from fire, hanging over the fire with smoke, bruises on the head. 2. Intention to destroy is no necessary ingredient to murder; as in case, first, Of knocking a servant when death followeth, Exodus 20:20–21. If one or two violent strokes of correction on which death followeth be capital, is it not alike capital to shorten life by many acts of rigour, hastening death by degrees? Secondly, Of killing a child in the womb, Exodus 21:22–23. Thirdly, Of not keeping up a goring ox, Exodus 21,29. Two things be requisite to make casual killing murder: viz., 1. To be conversant in *re illicita* whence death followeth, as the Benjamites in defiling the Levite's concubine, Judges 19:25–26. 2. In *re licita non adhibere debitam diligentiam ad evitandum mortale periculum*: as in these three cases. Hence, such as give *poculum amatorium*, whence death followeth, *summo supplicio afficiunter*, Co. tom. i., part 1, col. 2, page 592. It is done, *licet non malo animo*, yet *malo exemplo*.

Objection 2. Most of his hard usage was before his first coming to prison, after which he began to recover.

Answer. First, It argueth the prison was better to him than his master's house. In prison he mended and began to recover; in his master's house

he relapsed and decayed. Secondly, His disease was never thoroughly cured, and therefore all his hard usage before and after imprisonment tended to increase his disease and hasten his death.

Verse 4. Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon having showed the vanity that befalleth the estates of the sons of men by oppression, in verse 1–3, he now in this verse speaketh of the vanity that befalleth them by reason of envy, verse 4, and then proceedeth to speak of the vanity that befalleth a man from himself through, first, Idleness, verse 5; secondly, Covetousness, verses 7–8; thirdly, Solitariness, verse 9–12; fourthly, Wilfulness, verse 13–16.

Doctrine. It is a vanity afflicting the spirits of men, that when a man's work is right, and he hath taken pains to do that which is good and right, yet for all this he shall be envied of his neighbours.

Reason of envy at good: first, Pride of heart and excessive self-love; for envy is the sadness of the heart for the good that we see in another, in regard so much glory (or praise) seemeth to be taken from us as is given to him. Eliab taxed that in David which was his own sin, 1 Samuel 17:28. Hence hatred of our brother, as wishing him deprived of the good he hath. Secondly, Profane and rebellious infidelity; for either we do not believe that our brother hath these gifts given him of God (for if we did, it would mortify envy, John 3:26–27), and this is profane infidelity; or else, if we believe they were given him of God, it is rebellious infidelity to grudge against God's goodness, Matthew 20:15. Thirdly, Want of union with Christ, and communion with our brethren; for if we were united to Christ by faith, and one to another by brotherly love, the glory of Christ would be a comfort to us, by whomsoever advanced, Philippians 1:16–19; and if we were united in brotherly love one to another, the honour of one member would be the joy of another, 1 Corinthians 12:26. One finger envieth not another that weareth a gold ring, as taking it for an ornament of the whole hand—yea, of the whole body.

Reason why it is afflictive: first, To the envious person it rotteth and wasteth the vigour of body and spirit, Proverbs 14:30. Secondly, To the person envied, 1. It is dangerous, threatening loss of life, as in Abel, Joseph, David, Daniel, Christ; it is murder, Proverbs 27:4. 2. It is uncomfortable and grievous to see a man's self so ill-beloved, that his good should be another man's harm.

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Use. To reprove the envious person. See how many foul sins are wrapped up in his heart—sins against God, his neighbour, and himself. See the Reason.

It argueth weakness and baseness of spirit. *Quorum similitudinem desperant eoum affectant similitatem Apul. Flo. lib. i.* It is weakness of eyes to water and run at the sight of light. Yea, it is next step to the sin against the Holy Ghost. Both malign others for their goodness, only the one maligneth it as it is the grace of God, or glory of Christ; the other as it is a glory to a neighbour. Such as grieve at others' good would rejoice in their evil; love grieveth at the evil of another, but envy grieveth at the good of another.

Means against this sin: first, Faith to discern whence gifts spring, John 3:27; secondly, Love to look at them as given to our use. What if all the town were good physicians, and I only had no skill that way? The more ready help it would be to me. What though Deborah did not kill Sisera, but Jael? yet Deborah rejoiceth in it heartily, Judges 5:24.

Use 2. To teach men in well-doing what to expect—not applause, not encouragement, but envy. And yet not thereby to be discouraged from well-doing; not to think it strange to find such unchristian entertainment, even amongst Christians.

Verse 5. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

Verse 6. Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.

Solomon, having showed the vanity that befalleth men through oppression and envy, he proceedeth to show the vanity that befalleth the estate of men through idleness; where he describeth the idle person, first, By his adjunct of folly, *the fool*; secondly, By his cessation from action, and his composing himself to that cessation, *a fool foldeth his hands together*; thirdly, By the cause of that his cessation or restiness, a deceitful imagination of the betterment of a handful, with ease and quietness, than of both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit, verse 6.

Doctrine 1. An idle person, by his forbearance of labour, maketh himself both a fool and a beggar; or a man that withholdeth himself from labour, doth both befool and undo himself. Folding of the hands

together is an act of an idle or slothful person, first, Withholding himself from labour; secondly, Composing himself to rest or sleep, Proverbs 24:30,33, and 6:10. It is all one whether he fold his fingers together, or fold his arms together; put his hands into his pocket or bosom, Proverbs 19:24. All alike express cessation from labour, with a mind to forbear it.

Reasons of befooling himself: first, It is folly to mistake names and natures of things, especially to delude ourselves with false names. To account and call that to be quietness which is idleness, slothfulness, sluggishness; to account diligent labour, travail, vexation of spirit. Secondly, It is folly to think a handful will be gotten with idleness, whereas nothing will be so gotten, Proverbs 13:4, and 20:4, and 23:21, and 24:34. Thirdly, It is folly to think that a handful, gotten with ease and idleness, is better than both the handfuls with diligent labour, where-as a little gotten with labour is more precious and comfortable, Ecclesiastes 5:19; Proverbs 12:27. Fourthly, It is folly, yea, a foolish tempting of God, to separate the end from the means; to expect maintenance without labour, Genesis 3:17; Proverbs 10:4. Fifthly, It is like folly to separate the mean from the end, God having given hands to labour, mind and wit to employ in some honest calling, for private and public good ends, which to neglect is a slothful folly, Matthew 25:26. Sixthly, It is a folly for a man to prefer his wisdom and practice above others who excel him, verse 6. This folly is very incident to idle persons, Proverbs 26:16.

Reasons of undoing himself: first, By wasting and neglecting the means of his subsistence, Proverbs 18:9; Ecclesiastes 10:18; Proverbs 20:4. No man's estate is infinite or bottomless, Proverbs 27:24–27. Secondly, By breeding diseases, wasting the body. Rest to the body is as rust to metal. 3. By corrupting the mind with wantonness, pride, folly, Ezekiel 16:49. Standing pools gather mud and venomous vermin. 4. By wasting a man's kindred also, who are his own flesh.

Use 1. To wean us from idleness, as that which maketh us both fools and beggars. See all the particulars in the reasons.

It is a sin. against the third commandment, as spending our time and talents in vain. Against the

fourth commandment, as not labouring six days, and so unfitting us for rest on the seventh. Against the fifth commandment, Proverbs 10:5. Against the sixth commandment, in the text. Against the seventh commandment, Ezekiel 16:49. Against the eighth commandment, Proverbs

10:4, 19:15, and 20:4. Idleness is counted a gentleman's life, but it is a base and foolish condition.

Case 2. To observe the deceitfulness of sin, to cover and colour idleness with the name of quietness, but labour with the name of travail and vexation of spirit. Self-love maketh us apt to make a good construction of our own ways. The vicinity or nearness of virtue and vice maketh us apt to mistake and miscall one for another.

Use 3. To teach parents to train up their children in a way of diligence. If either parent be idle, children will follow the worse part. God gave Christ a calling to be king, priest, and prophet to his church. The angels have all a calling, Hebrews 1:14; Adam in paradise, a gardener, Genesis 2:15; Cain, a husbandman; Abel, a shepherd; Noah, a vinedresser. Kings must be diligent and provident, Proverbs 27:23–27; queens, housewives, Proverbs 31.

Use 4. To teach us to labour most in our chiefest work, 2 Peter 1:10; Philippians 2:12.

Verse 7. Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.

Verse 8. There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.

In the former verses next going before, Solomon observed the vanity that befalleth the estates of the sons of men through idleness. In these two verses he observeth as great a vanity that befalleth the sons of men through needless painfulness,—to wit, the painfulness that covetous men put themselves to without, 1. Cause; 2. End; 3. Satisfaction; 4. Recreation, or refreshing; 5. Consideration.

First, Without cause; he is a lone man, hath no second, no wife, child, nor brother. Secondly, Without end; no end of all his labour, no term of it.

Thirdly, Without satisfaction; his eye is not satisfied

with riches. Fourthly, Without refreshing; he bereaveth his soul of good. Fifthly, Without consideration; he considereth not, For whom do I Labour, and bereave my soul of good? but not without vanity and sore travail and affliction.

Doctrine. It is a vanity and sore travail or affliction that a lone man should put himself to endless and restless labour for riches, and yet neither his eye satisfied with it, nor himself refreshed by it, nor he so much as to consider with himself for whose sake he taketh so much pains, and so little ease and comfort.

A lone man, one that hath no second,—that is, (1.) No wife; (2.) No child; (3.) No brother.

Yet there is no end of his labour. No end, no term or cessation; for ¶7 signifieth not an end of intention, but an end of cessation.

Neither is his eye satisfied with riches,—that is, his desire, covetous desire, which looketh out of the windows of his eyes, hence covetousness is called the lusts of the eyes, 1 John 2:16; the eyes being that which, 1. Breedeth covetousness, John 7:21; 2. Is only fed by it, Ecclesiastes 5:11. He defraudeth, first, His body of wholesome diet, physick, recreation, sleep, Ecclesiastes 10:19; secondly, His name of honour; thirdly, His soul of grace, Luke 8:14.

1. *Reason*, why without cause. First, From the just hand of God upon a man that seeketh not, nor taketh the Lord for his God and sovereign good, that he shall make the creature, mammon, his god, and so seek it for himself; as a godly man labours hard to enjoy more of God, whether he have any children or brethren to leave him to or no, Matthew 6:21. Secondly, From the ambitious end of some that, leaving a great estate behind them, it may be said they lived not like drones, or idle bees, or prodigals, or shallow shuttlecocks, but knew how to live and thrive in the world, Habakkuk 2:5. He is a proud man, &c.

2. *Reason*, why without end. First, From want of satisfaction in riches, Ecclesiastes 5:10. Secondly, From want of attaining a man's proper place when he hath attained never so great wealth. A stone resteth and ceaseth to move when it is fallen to the earth, which is its proper place. But a covetous man ceaseth not his labour, because his wealth is not his proper place.

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3. *Reasons* why without satisfaction. First, From the insufficiency, 1. Of bodily things to satisfy a spirit; 2. Of temporal and transitory things to satisfy an eternal and immortal soul. Secondly, From the unnaturalness of this lust. It is a disease like the dropsy, which is increased by drinking; yea, it is a lust set on fire from hell, Habakkuk 2:5.

4. *Reason*, why without refreshing. First, From the curse upon creature comforts, Genesis 3:17. Thorns and thistles is their fruit, they pierce the heart through, 1 Timothy 6:10.

5. *Reason*, why without satisfaction. First, From the nature of sensual and earthly things—they stupefy the heart; hence they are said to choke, Matthew 13:22. Secondly, From the curse of God upon idolatry; idols, and they that worship them, are alike senseless, Psalm 115:8; Isaiah 44:18–20.

Use 1. To observe, that sometimes men of great estates, and great dexterity and industry to get great estates, may yet want children and kindred to leave it to, as Nabal, 1 Samuel 25:11; and Abraham, long, Genesis 15:2, with 17:17. As on the contrary some men have wives and store of children, and poor kindred to leave it to, and yet want estate to leave them. Thus, first, There lieth a vanity upon all men's estates. The poor eateth his bread with sorrow, because he hath so little for so great a household; the rich, because he hath not whom to leave it to. Secondly, God bestoweth his gifts severally; to some children and kindred, but no riches—to others riches, but no children or kindred. Which, first, Showeth the emptiness of riches, that can get neither children on earth, nor father in heaven; secondly, Calleth upon others for more thankfulness, who have both wealth and children.

Use 2. To teach such as have children to be more diligent in their calling, and to be more provident in their expenses; for Solomon counteth it a vanity and sore travail, for men that want children to take such pains; not for them that have many, 2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Timothy 5:8. It is engrafted in nature, the old to provide for the young; the want whereof God accounteth want of understanding in the ostrich, and cruelty, Job 39:14–17.

Use 3. To teach the wife her due place. She is a second, not a first; she is not above her husband,

for he is her head, Ephesians 5:23, nor beneath children or brethren.

Use 4. To dissuade from covetousness. It tireth out body and mind with restless labour and care. It yieldeth neither satisfaction nor refreshing. It stupefieth and besotteth the heart.

Use 5. For a sign of covetousness. It setteth a man upon more labour than cause; we rather covet wealth, than consider what to do with it. We bereave ourselves of many useful comforts.

Use 6. To labour for such wealth as will satisfy, and which will not bereave the soul of good, but feed and refresh it with the chief good, Isaiah 55:2–3.

Verse 9. Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

Verse 10. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

Verse 11. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

Verse 12. And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Upon occasion of speech of the vanity that befalleth the lonesome estate of men by covetousness, he declareth another vanity that befalleth a lonesome estate of men, though covetousness be wanting, through unprofitableness and helplessness; and therefore preferreth the society of two, and much more of three, before lonesomeness, and that in all the affairs which are incident to human life. Which are all of them either, first, Voluntary, of which kind he putteth in, as in the rest, one example for many: as labour; two have a better reward for their labour, verse 9. Secondly, Casual; if the one fall, the other shall help up his fellow; which he amplifieth by the woe or misery that may befall a lonesome man in such case for want of help, verse 10. Thirdly, Natural; if two lie together, then they have heat; amplified by denial of warmth to one alone, verse 11. Fourthly, Violent; if one prevail against him, two shall withstand; which he amplifieth by a proverbial *epiphonema*, ‘A threefold cord is not easily broken’, verse 12.

Doctrine. Society in all sorts of human affairs is better than solitariness.

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Some conceive this place spoken in praise of marriage, and preferment of it above single life; but though that have a place here, marriage being one kind of society, yet is not marriage only here meant. Yea, the proverb of a threefold cord doth not so fitly agree to that: polygamy is not preferred before digamy, I mean before the marriage of two, one man with one woman.

First, In voluntary affairs, God would have two workmen chief about the ark—1. Bezaliel; 2. Aholiab, Exodus 31:2,6. The Egyptians in Pierius's hieroglyphics expressed the unprofitableness of a solitary man by one millstone, which alone grindeth no meal, but with his fellow is most serviceable to prepare meal, and so bread for man. In the body all instruments of action are made by pairs, as hands, feet, eyes, ears, legs, thighs, &c., though but one head. It is because a man hath liberty to consult with many heads in any business of importance; yea, if the business be urgent, and require haste, yet he hath another, his wife in his own family. In spiritual things, Christ sent forth his disciples two by two, Luke 10:1. Paul and Barnabas sent out together by the Holy Ghost, Acts 13:2; and when they fell out, Paul took Silas, and Barnabas took Mark, Acts 15:39–40. Hence a pastor and a teacher appointed to assist one another for one congregation, Romans 12:7–8. In all duties, two or three have a special assistance, Matthew 18:20.

Secondly, In casual events. Though a man may travel often, and find no harm, meet with no fall, or having fallen, may help himself, yet sometimes a dangerous fall happeneth in which society helpeth and saveth, Luke 10:30, which is most apparent in spiritual falls, 2 Samuel 12:1–13; 2 Chronicles 19:2. In these falls which are bodily, men sooner feel their falls, and the danger of them, but in spiritual falls sin is of a venomous nature, and like some poisons blindeth the eyes, and stupefieth the feeling; so that here a faithful Christian helper is a special mercy.

Thirdly, In natural dispositions and works. If one lie alone in old and cold age, or in cold weather, he is without heat, 1 Kings 1:1–2. Brands of fire laid together keep heat; one alone, though never so well kindled, goeth out. In spiritual matters much more. Compare 2 Corinthians 1:12–13, with Acts 18:5. See all 2 Chronicles 24:2,17–18, and 26:5,16.

Fourthly, In violent assaults one much helpeth his fellow, 2 Samuel 10:9–12. In spiritual assaults it is the like case. Eve alone yielded to the tempter, who, if she had kept with her husband, and consulted with him, might have resisted the temptation, and kept her innocency.

Reason 1. From the Lord's appointment of mankind to live in societies, first, Of family, Genesis 2:18, Psalm 68:6; secondly, Church, Ephesians 2:19,22; thirdly, Commonwealth, Ephesians 2:12.

Reason 2. From the variety of gifts given to the sons of men; and to none all, that one may stand in need of another, and make use of one

another, 1 Corinthians 12:8–11. Yea, it is so in civil gifts; no man is skilled in all occupations.

Reason 3. From the subordination of some gifts to others, as the bricklayer to the mason, the maker of mortar to both; whence these together much further one another's business, and so make better riddance of work, and get a better reward.

Use 1. To refute the popish anchorites and hermits, who think solitary life a state of perfection; but Solomon judgeth it a woeful estate.

Use 2. To refute such as love to be alone in all their counsels and proceedings, and are not willing to communicate with others. Thus pride of heart maketh a man of a savage nature. Wild beasts love to go alone, but tame by flocks and herds. And to teach men to affect society in all their affairs. Solomon, though full of wisdom, yet had a college of wise counsellors, 1 Kings 12:6.

Use 3. To persuade also seasonably to marriage; yea, as preferring it before single life, Genesis 2:18. Adam had no need of a wife as a remedy against incontinency, yet married.

Use 4. To teach men in societies to do one another the more good, else Solomon's discourse falleth. Now-a-days company doth one another much hurt.

Verse 13. Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.

Verse 14. For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor.

Verse 15. I considered all the living which walk

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under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.

Verse 16. There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

In these words, Solomon declareth the vanity and vexation of spirit that befalleth upon kings and princes, and so upon royal estates; and that from a double ground or cause: first, From the folly and wilfulness of

kings, verses 13–14; secondly, Through the levity and inconstancy of the people, verses 15–16. The folly and wilfulness of kings he argueth from the meanness and baseness of that estate; and that he aggravateth by an argument *a majori*, of a far better estate of a wise child, though poor, above a foolish king, though old, and so for age venerable; preferring the low estate of the one, above the highest estate of the other, verse 13. And this he proveth by the effects of both their estates: for the poor wise child out of prison cometh to reign; the other, born and waxen old in his kingdom, becometh poor, verse 14. In declaring the levity and inconstancy of the people, he noteth it as a vanity found in the people of all the nations under the sun: first, That there is no end, or stay, or rest of the people's affections to their princes and governors; secondly, That the people will wax weary of the young prince that shall come after the old king, after they have tried his government, verse 16. And both these he proveth by his own observation of all the people living in all nations under the sun, and comparing the people's dealing with the second child that shall stand up in the old king's stead, verse 15.

Doctrine There is a vanity and vexation of spirit that befalleth the estate of kings and princes, partly through their own folly and wilfulness, partly through the levity and inconstancy of the people.

Reasons of their vanity through their own folly and wilfulness: first, From the preferment of a wise child in his worst estate above such a prince in his best estate. Childhood is despicable in any, Ecclesiastes 11:10; 1 Timothy 4:12, much more in poverty, Ecclesiastes 9:16. Old age is honourable in any, Leviticus 9:32, much more in princes. Yet when a king, though old, is foolish and wilful, a poor wise child is better than he; yea, though the child were a captive? a

prisoner. For such a poor child or youth may, out of prison, come to reign, as Joseph, Genesis 41:14,40; David, 1 Samuel 18:23; Daniel, chapter 6:3. Whereas an old king may by folly and wilfulness become poor, as Pharaoh, Exodus 10:7; Saul, 1 Samuel 28:15; Jehoram, 2 Kings 6:25, and 7:13; Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 4:33; Manasseh, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, Zedekiah, all of them prisoners, 2 Chronicles 33:11, and 36:4, and 2 Kings 23:33, 34:15, and 25:7. The occasion whereof is, 1. God's delight to honour the humble, and crush the proud, 1 Peter 5:5; Job 40:11–12. 2. Pride is the root of wilfulness.

Reason of their vanity, through the levity of the people. From their aptness to wax weary of any prince or governor, 1 Samuel 8:7; 2 Samuel

15:12–13; 1 Kings 1:11; and this springeth from want of attainment of their ends in their magistrates. ‘There is no end of all the people’, verse 16. Everything resteth in the attainment of his end. The end of magistracy is set down, 1 Timothy 2:2; this the people not attending, nor attaining, they cannot rest. Hence they are compared to waves of the sea, never still—sometimes full sea, sometimes low water, Psalm 65:7; Revelation 17:15; Isaiah 57:20.

Use 1. To teach us that royal state is no sanctuary nor preservative from folly and wilfulness. Not only wicked kings, but all have had their pangs and strains of folly: David’s numbering the people, 2 Samuel 24:10; adultery and murder; Solomon’s love of strange wives, and toleration, yea, continuance of idolatry; Asa, his league with Benhadad, imprisonment of the prophets, and trust in physicians; Jehoshaphat, his affinity with Ahab and league with idolaters; Hezekiah, showing his treasures to the ambassadors of Babel; Josiah, his war against Pharaoh-Necho. Yea, wilfulness found not only in Pharaoh, Exodus 5:1–2; in Saul, 1 Samuel 20:30–33; in Jeroboam, 1 Kings 13,33; in Jehu, 2 Kings 10:29,31; but sometimes in good kings: in David, 2 Samuel 24:1–4; in Asa, 1 Chronicles 16:9–10.

Causes hereof: first, God’s hand, Psalm 107:40. Secondly, Satan, 1 Chronicles 21:1. Thirdly, Great places breed great spirits; whence pride springeth, that leaveneth and hardeneth the whole lump, Jeremiah 22:21. Fourthly, Old age is froward and stiff. Fifthly, Flatterers about princes lead them into ill

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ways for their own ends, and stiffen them in them, Hosea 7:3,5; Amos 7:10–13; 1 Kings 12:10–11.

A warning, first, To princes, to pray for a wise and learning heart, 1 Kings 3:9; secondly, To people, to strive with God for their princes, Psalm 72:1–2.

Use 2. To refuse admonition is a great folly, even in a prince, even in an old prince, 1 Kings 12:6–7, 13; 2 Chronicles 16:9–10. More hope of a fool than of such, Proverbs 26:12, and 12:1. It bringeth the commonwealth into a snare, Proverbs 29:8. How much more foolish is this wilfulness either in meaner or younger people.

Use 3. To teach us the excellency of wisdom, which youth, yea, childhood and poverty, cannot debase, but it will arise to preferment: and the baseness of folly and stubbornness, which nobility and age cannot honour.

Use 4. To teach parents to train up their children to wisdom, and therefore to learning and godliness; and withal to break them of their wilfulness, that so they may be fit for preferment in the eyes of God and men.

Use 5. To reprove the inconstancy of people, and the cause thereof, their neglect of the light end of magistracy, 1 Timothy 2:2.

Use 6. To wean great men from popularity: the people's favour is unstable, Job 5:35; Matthew 21:8–9, with 27:22–23.

CHAPTER V.

Verse 1. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

Verse 2. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

Verse 3. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.

In this chapter Solomon declareth the vanity found, first, In the performance of God's worship, verses 5–7; secondly, In marvelling and murmuring at oppressions in men of place, verse 8; thirdly, In

riches, verse 9–19; in declaring the vanity found, not in God's worship, but in men's manner of performance of it, lest he might seem with the profane, Malachi 3:14, to esteem it a vain thing to serve God, he rather directeth men how to prevent such vanities, than declareth the vanities which they fall into in God's worship. His direction in these three verses is, first, In general; to take heed or look well to our ways, when we enter into holy public assemblies, verse 5. Secondly, In particular; to draw nigh to hear. Whereof he giveth a reason, from the folly of all sacrifices without drawing near to hear, verse 5; which is amplified by the reason thereof, taken from the evil of such a worship, and their ignorance of that evil who do so perform it, verse 5. 2. To avoid hastiness and multitude of words before God. Whereof he giveth a twofold reason: first, From God's heavenly majesty, in comparison of earthly baseness, verse 2; secondly, From the folly springing from multitude of words, amplified by the comparison of a dream coming from multitude of business, verse 3. The words may fitly be opened, in opening the doctrine which ariseth from them.

Doctrine. When we come into the presence of God in holy assemblies, it is for us to take heed to our ways, that we may draw nigh to hear, and be serious and short in speech before the Lord.

To take heed to our feet is, by a metonymy, to take heed to our ways, as Psalm 119:115, and 39:1. Which implieth, first, Cleansing of our feet (that is, our steps) before holy duties, 1 Peter 2:1–2; Psalm 26:6,12; John 13:10; James 4:8. Secondly, Attention to the performance of holy duties in a holy manner, Exodus 3:5; Joshua 5:15; Leviticus 10:3.

Be more ready to hear is better translated, ‘Draw nigh to hear, rather than offer’, &c. Which drawing nigh to hear implieth, first, Putting away all such things as set God far off from us, James 4:8; Psalm 138:6; Isaiah 59:2. Secondly, Sincere desire and purpose of heart to attend and obey the whole counsel of God, Acts 10:33; else we are far off, Matthew 15:7, 8; Ezekiel 33:31. Thirdly, Mingling it with faith, that is, with faithful application to ourselves, Romans 10:8; Hebrews 4:2.

Reason 1. From the folly of all sacrifices (of all other parts of God’s worship) if attention to the word be neglected, text; Proverbs 28:9. It is an

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evil before God, and evacuateth the acceptance of all our oblations, 1 Samuel 15:22–23. And it is also mixed with vacuity and ignorance, to think we are well occupied, and spend our time well, when indeed we lose our labour, yea, return worse than we came.

Reason of serious and short speech: 1. From God’s heavenly majesty in comparison of our earthly baseness, verse 2; Proverbs 10:19; Matthew 6:7. His heavenly majesty, first, Knoweth all our wants when we pray, Matthew 6:32; secondly, Is a spirit that is not moved with words, but spirit and life, John 4:23–24; thirdly, His own words, when he speaketh to us, are spirit and life, John 6:63. And therefore we must not beat the air in hasty and much speech.

Reason 2. From the vanity and folly of long discourses, whether in prayer or preaching, verse 3,7; Proverbs 10:19. As a dream cometh by much business, so a fool’s voice by multitude of words, verse 3, where blot out in the translation, *is known*.

Use 1. To teach us how we are to esteem holy assemblies. They are the house of God; in old time, so was the tabernacle and temple, 1 Kings 9:1; Psalm 132:5, 74:8, and 83:12. Which were types, first, Of Christ’s body, John 2:21; secondly, Of the church assembly, 1 Corinthians 3:16. Now,

therefore, church assemblies are the Lord's house, 1 Timothy 3:15. Not our meeting-houses, but God's people in them, Acts 7:48–49; John 4:21; 1 Timothy 2:8.

Use 2. To reprove falling down to private prayer, either, first, In meeting-houses behind a pillar, in the absence of the people; secondly, In the presence of the people, but not joining with them. All public duties should be performed, first, With one accord, Acts 1:14, 2:46, and 4:24; secondly, To public edification, 1 Corinthians 14:26. Also to reprove Latin service, and instruction by images, which are to be seen, not heard; likewise to reprove standing far off when we may come within hearing; also careless and listless carriage in the congregation, standing like pillars, driving away the time with sleeping, talking, gazing about; likewise running out of doors before all be ended. Moreover, lowness of voice in ministers, which hindereth hearing.

Use 3. To teach us such preparation before hearing, and attention in hearing, as may be acceptable to God and profitable to ourselves.

Use 4. To teach ministers, in prayer and preaching,

both weight of matter and shortness of words, Proverbs 10:19–20, and 29:20.

Objection. But was not Christ long in prayer—a whole night? Luke 6:12; and Paul in preaching? Acts 20:7,9.

Answer. First, Upon extraordinary occasions; second, With as much variety of matter and fervency of spirit as multitude of words.

Verse 4. *Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.*

Verse 5. *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.*

Verse 6. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*

Verse 7. *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*

In the three former verses Solomon instructed us to avoid in God's worship the irreverent neglect of attention in hearing, and rashness in speaking before God. In these verses he instructeth against the vanity in

the delay or neglect of payment of vows: 'When thou hast vowed a vow, defer not to pay it', whereof he giveth six reasons:—

Reason 1. From the folly—yea, hateful folly, folly hateful to God—to delay payment of vows, verse 4.

Reason 2. *A majori*, from the betterment of not vowing, above not paying, verse 5.

Reason 3. From the defilement of the whole man by the rashness of the mouth in vowing, which a man should not suffer: 'Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin', verse 6.

Reason 4. From the inexcusableness of such a sin, from its not falling under that kind of sins for which sacrifices are wont to be offered: 'Neither say thou before the angel that it was an error.'

Reason 5. From God's anger and vengeance against such vows and such excuses, even to the destroying of the works of a man's hand, verse 6.

Reason 6. From the vanity of such rash vows and speeches—yea, the variety of vanity in them, answerable to what is found in many dreams, verse 7.

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Against all which he prescribeth an antidote or preservation—to wit, the fear of God: 'But fear thou God', verse 7.

Doctrine 1. When a man hath vowed a vow to God, he is to pay it, and that without delay, Deuteronomy 23:21–23; Psalm 76:11, and 56:12, 'Thy vows are upon me'; as an engagement or debt, which a faithful man would be careful to discharge to men, much more to God, Psalm 50:14; Nahum 1:15. For opening the point, it is to be shown, 1. What a vow is; 2. What is a seasonable time of vowing, and whether now at all, in the days of the New Testament; 3. The reasons against delay of payment of vows.

1. What a vow is. A lawful vow, it is a promise made to God, wherein a man bindeth his soul to perform some acceptable work to God. First, A promise made to God, wherein it differeth from a prayer. In a prayer, we require something which God hath promised to us; in a vow, we promise something to God. Hence in the text the vow is said to be vowed to God, verses 4 and 2. Secondly, A man bindeth his soul to God in them, Numbers 30:4. Thirdly, To perform some acceptable thing to God. Unlawful things we may not vow, as the Jews did, Acts 23:12–13; nor impossible, nor unsuitable to our calling. But two sorts of things are acceptable matters of vows: first, Religious obedience to God in his commandments,

Psalm 119:109; Genesis 28:20–21; secondly, Helps to obedience, and removal of impediments. Payment of tithes was a help to worship, and to the maintenance of it, in those days when God accepted such a maintenance for his priests, Nehemiah 9:38, with 10:29,32; Genesis 28:22. So contributions, Acts 4:37; So the vow of a Nazarite, 1 Samuel 1:11; Job 31:1, was a removal of an impediment, 2 Corinthians 11:10, a prevention of dishonour to Paul's ministry.

2. A seasonable time of vowing is, first, When we stand in need of some special favour from God; then, as we desire God might draw more nigh to us in special mercy, so it is meet we should draw more nigh to God in special duty, Genesis 28:20–22; Numbers 21:1–3. Secondly, When we have received some special mercy, Psalm 116:8–9, and 79:11; Jonah 1:16. Thirdly, When we find our hearts ready to betray us to this or that evil by

occasion, we may vow against such occasions, and vow also the contrary duties, Job 31:1; 2 Corinthians 11:10; which argueth vows are not unseasonable in the days of the gospel. Fourthly, When we are to enter into some new relation whereof God is the author, and the duties of the relation depend upon our vows or covenants with God, and with one another. Thus in marriage, Proverbs 2:17; Malachi 2:14; and in church covenant, 2 Corinthians 8:5, and 11:2.

Reason 1. From the folly, yea, hateful folly, folly hateful to God, to delay payment of vows, verse 4.

Reason 2. From the preferment of not vowing, before not paying vows, verse 5.

Reason 3. From the charge lying upon us to keep our mouths, and the evil of sin redounding to our whole man by rash vowing, verse 6, as who should say, We have sins enough, and frailties whereto we are subject otherwise; we had not need rashly to rush into more by such inconsideration.

Reason 4. From the vanity of the excuse of such a sin before the angel, as an error of ignorance; where by angel is meant the priest or messenger of the Lord, as Malachi 2:7, before whom the excuser of his rash vow would come and offer sacrifice for his ignorance or error, Leviticus 4:27, 28; the same word here and there and oft in that chapter, as verse 2,13,22,27.

Reason 5. From the wrath and vengeance of God against such vows and such excuses. God will be angry at thy voice, and destroy the works of thy hands. Thus God was angry with Jacob for delay, Genesis 34:30, with 35:1; thus he destroyed Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:2–5.

Reason 6. From the variety of vanities in such vows and delays, as in dreams—to wit in both, first, Idleness and unprofitableness; secondly, Confusion; thirdly, Troublesomeness; fourthly, Contradictions; fifthly, Absurdities; sixthly, Falsehoods.

Use 1. To refute popish vows, as to saints, without a pattern in Scripture. See *Bell, lib. de culta Sanctorum, c. 9.* The like evil is in vows of poverty, perpetual single life, and regular obedience; they are like the idolatrous praying priests, 2 Kings 23:5; for incense was a type of prayer, Psalm 14:12. Vows to the devil, as in witchcraft; vows of all unlawful things; for all such vows, men that make them are to be humbled for them, and to break them, lest we draw in God to bind us to sin.

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Use 2. To exhort to careful payment of our vows in baptism, in church covenant, in marriage, in our prayers (wherein we usually promise to God) duly, Psalm 119:32–34.

Use 3. To exhort to the fear of God, as that which preventeth all these vanities, verse 7, which befall men in God's worship. This fear of God will help us, first, To vow in sense of our own insufficiency, either (1.) To make vows; (2.) To pay vows. Secondly, To depend on Christ for both.

Verse 8. If thou seest the oppression of the poor and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

As in the former verses Solomon sought to prevent the vanities that are wont to be found in men's performance of God's service, so in this verse he seeks to prevent the vanity of discontentment or discouragement that is wont to arise in men's hearts from the oppressions of the poor, and the violent wrestings of justice and judgment.

The evil here noted is, oppression of the poor and the wresting of judgment and justice.

The remedy he prescribeth against the vanity that might arise in men upon beholding of it is, not to wonder.

The reason of not wondering is from the regard which the most high God, and others higher than magistrates, have of this matter: 'For he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than these.'

Doctrine. The beholding of the oppression of the poor in a country, and of the wresting of justice and judgment, should not put a man to wonder, Revelation 17:6, 7; 1 Peter 4:12.

Objection. The prophets of God, inspired by the Holy Ghost, have wondered at it, Isaiah 1:21; yea, the Lord himself, Isaiah 59:14–16.

Answer. Wondering may arise from a fourfold cause. First, Ignorance of the cause, John 7:15; secondly, Crossness to causes, or expectation from them, Isaiah 5:4,7, and 59:16; thirdly, Strangeness or newness, Luke 5:26; Mark 1:27; fourthly, Astonishment or uncertainty what to do, Jeremiah 4:9; Zechariah 12:4; Deuteronomy 28:28. The second sort of wondering is only incident to God, and that only; the

other three are commonly found amongst men, and are wont to breed in them both discontent and discouragement.

Reason 1. From the Lord's ordering it, so implied in the word שומר, *keepeth*. When he keepeth, no hurt done but as he directeth, Isaiah 27:3; Proverbs 29:26; Leviticus 26:14–17; Isaiah 9:5; Psalm 109:6.

Reason 2. From God's sovereignty over such as do oppress the poor and wrest judgment; and he will require and requite it, Psalm 12:5; Lamentations 3:36; Job 34:18–20, 26–28; Ecclesiastes 3:16–17.

Reason 3. From the pre-eminence and presidency of angels over high princes, Daniel 4:17; 2 Kings 19:35; Matthew 18:10.

Use 1. For instruction to people not to wonder at oppressions, or wrestings of justice or judgment, so as to break forth either into discontent or discouragement, Psalm 37:1–2, 7–8. But, instead of wondering, first inquire the truth of it, whether it be so or no, Genesis 18:20–21; Joshua 22:16, &c., with 30, &c. Secondly, If true—1. See God's hand in all, Lamentations 3:38; Proverbs 29:26. 2. Seek to reprove, Jeremiah 22:17, and reform, 1 Samuel 14:45, according to our places. 3. Either remove timely, Psalm 55:6–11, or patiently wait upon God, Psalm 37:3–7, and suffer from man.

Use 2. To warn magistrates and great men to take heed to their ways. The Lord observeth, regardeth, requiteth, 2 Chronicles 19:6.

Use 3. For comfort to the poor oppressed. Though no man regard the poor and their just cause, yet God and his angels do.

Verse 9. Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.

Verse 10. He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

Verse 11. When goods increase they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof saving the beholding of them with their eyes?

Verse 12. The sleep of a labouring man is sweet whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

Verse 13. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun namely riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

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Verse 14. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.

Verse 15. As he came forth of his mother' womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

Verse 16. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

Verse 17. All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

In these words the Holy Ghost setteth forth the vanity of covetousness, or the love of money, by sundry arguments. First, From the unsatiableness of it, verse 10, amplified by the contrary sufficing and satisfying profit which the earth or field yieldeth to all sorts, even to kings, verse 9. Secondly, From the diversion, or turning aside, of the profit of wealth to others, and reserving no more benefit to the owners than the bare sight thereof, verse 11. Thirdly, From the distress and unquietness which abundance—1. Of meats and drinks; 2. Of cares—yieldeth to the owner by the excess, amplified by the contrary sweet and quiet sleep and rest of the labouring servant, verse 12. Fourthly, From the hurt redounding to the owners by wealth, verse 13. Fifthly, From the perishing of riches by evil travail, verse 14. Sixthly, from the penury his seed may fall into, verse 14. Seventhly, From the necessity of leaving all behind him in death,

verses 15–16. Eighthly, From the many crosses and vexations which befall a man in his lifetime from his wealth, verse 17.

Doctrine. The earth yieldeth sufficient profit unto all sorts of men, from the king to the meanest servant, but not to covetousness, 1 Chronicles 27:26–31; Proverbs 27:23–27, and 31:16; 2 Chronicles 26:10; Amos 2:1. It is bread that strengthens man's heart above all other things, Isaiah 3:1; it is the staff, Psalm 104:15; Genesis 43:8. It is scarcity of bread that maketh a famine, not other commodities. And even the beasts and flocks are maintained by the earth.

Reason of the earth's yielding profit sufficient: first, God provideth it, as meet that that which bred us should feed us; secondly, That labour might be encouraged, and not lost, Genesis 3:19; thirdly, To beat into us a sense of our mortality. As the earth bred us, so it feedeth us till we return to it.

Not so covetousness, or the love of money, or of wealth.

Reason 1. From the unsatiableness of covetousness, verse 10. It is a great vanity when we covet a creature which cannot satisfy us when we have it. Hunger is satisfied with meat, thirst with drink; but hunger and thirst after wealth is not satisfied with wealth. The love of meat and drink will make a man willing to use and spend them, but the love of money and silver will not suffer a man to spend them. A poor man's poor estate may be relieved by one wealthy man's beneficence, but the hunger of the covetous cannot be satisfied with a hundred men's estates; a sign his heart and mind is unmeasurably poor and miserable. A man that is still hungry when he hath eaten enough (as in the βουλημία), or is still thirsty when he hath drunk enough (as in the dropsy), physicians say, *Opus habet purgatione, non impletione*; so is it with the covetous man. Though the covetous man may say and think he layeth up for his heirs, yet he would not have his heirs to spend it, but, like conduit-pipes, to convey it from one to another.

Reason 2. From the unprofitableness of abundance; it increaseth not our comforts, but expenses, 1 Kings 4:22–23. Servants must be multiplied suitably, 1. To our business; 2. To our rank. The eye is only fed with it, but neither that to satisfaction.

Reason 3. From the disrest and disquietness which abundance yieldeth by excess, 1. Of meats and drinks; 2. Cares and want of sleep, verse 12: which cometh to pass, first, By filling the stomach, and so straitening the lungs that they cannot breathe freely; secondly, By sending up store of

fumes and vapours into the brain, which fill it with excrements, and emptieth itself in rheums and phlegms, which, by spitting, coughing, and dreams, interrupt sleep; thirdly, By stupefying the animal spirits, which should recreate and refresh the brain; fourthly, By heating the brain in the night with study and cares. But labour breedeth sweet sleep: 1. When he eateth little his senses close for want of spirits to quicken and open them; 2. When a man eateth much, first, By exciting natural heat by labour; secondly, By washing superfluous humours, and so keeping the stomach and brain clean.

Reason 4. From the hurt redounding, to the owners

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by wealth, verse 13: hurt, 1. To the body, 1 Kings 21:6–8; 2. To the soul, first, Leading it into many temptations, 1 Timothy 6:9; Psalm 69:22; secondly, Choking good seed, Matthew 12:22; thirdly, Hardening men's hearts in evil of impenitency, Romans 2:4–5.

Reason 5. From the perishing of riches by evil travail, verse 14: either, first, Of a man's self, as by an ill haunt to hawks, hounds, whores, or suretyship, buildings, gaming, costly apparel; secondly, Of his household, children, servants, wasting and consuming their estate; thirdly, Of his enemies, Job 1:14–17.

Reason 6. From the penury incident to rich men's children, nothing in his hand: 1. No wealth; 2. No labour. First, Neither wit; secondly, Nor skill; thirdly, Nor strength to it.

Reason 7. From the necessity of leaving all behind a man at death, verse 15–16; Job 1:21; 1 Timothy 6:7. Only laden they are with more sin, else stripped of all outward things: first, Honours, Psalm 49:17; secondly, Profits, Luke 12:20; thirdly, Pleasures, Hebrews 11:25. We come into the world crying, we go out mourning and groaning. Hence all labour for wealth is for wind: first, We cannot hold and keep it; secondly, It swelleth us like empty bladders.

Reason 8. From the much anguish and sorrow and vexation which wealth causeth, through, first, Losses and crosses; secondly, Fears of after evils; thirdly, Darkness through want of spiritual light.

Use 1. To encourage to husbandry, and feeding of cattle, and all labour about the earth; it breedeth sufficient profit. The earth is a cistern to the sea also.

Use 2. To teach kings not to destroy the fruits of the earth. They undo themselves.

Use 3. To acknowledge the bounty of God in providing so fruitful a nurse for us, Acts 14:16–17.

Use 4. To dissuade from covetousness, which is when we love riches, first, For themselves, not for their use; secondly, Are not satisfied with them; thirdly, Are not content with what the earth may produce for diet, clothing, and lodging.

Use 5. To teach a painful poor man thankfulness.

Use 6. To teach all men, even rich men, moderation of diet, and diligence of labour, Proverbs 31:13, 19, 27.

Use 7. To teach wealthy men to beware of ill haunts, Proverbs 6:26, 21:17 and 23:21; but rather to employ their estates in some profitable matter; they will else come to an ill end.

Use 8. To teach parents to leave their children, first, A good covenant; secondly, Custom to labour. Any other wealth may come short to them.

Verse 18. Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.

Verse 19. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.

Verse 20. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

Solomon, having showed in the former verses the abuse of wealth by covetousness, in these words he showeth a contrary good use of wealth: first, In good men, verse 18; secondly, In all men, verse 19. In good men he saith it is comely and beautiful to eat, drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour all the days of his life, which God giveth him, verse 18.

Reason hereof he giveth, first, From the condition of his estate, and of this use of it, it is his portion, verse 18; secondly, From the quiet passing away of his time without sad remembrances of it, for he shall not much remember the days of his life; the reason whereof he giveth from God's answering his heart in comfort, verse 20. In all men to whom God hath given wealth, it is a gift of God, 1. To have power to eat of it; 2. To take his portion; 3. To rejoice in his labour, verse 19.

Doctrine. To eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of a man's labour, it is comely in a good man, and it is the gift of God in any man, Ecclesiastes 2:26, 3:12, 13, and 2:24.

Reasons to confirm it. 1. From Solomon's experience: 'Behold I have seen it, or found it', verse 18.

Reason 2. From the evil disease and vanity that lieth upon a man, when he is denied the power to make use of it, Ecclesiastes 6:2.

Reason 3. From the condition of men's estates in this world. It is their portion, verse 18, both to good men, verse 18, and to evil men, Psalm 17:14. As a portion, 1. It furnisheth us with necessaries, expediences, delights; 2. It maketh up crosses and

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losses; 3. It maketh provision for after times, yea, for another world, 1 Timothy 6:17–19.

Use 4. It is the fruit, or end, or good of his labour, verse 18.

Use 5. From the shortness of the days of a man's life, verse 18. He that reserveth the use of all till old age, may die before he come to use it at all, or else be then unable to use it, 2 Samuel 19:35.

Reason 6. From the joy and comfort wherein God answereth a good man's heart in enjoying the good of his labour, verse 20. Now, to enjoy the good of it, implieth, first, The reaping of the fat and sweet of it ourselves; secondly, To impart the good of it unto others also, Ecclesiastes 3:12–13; Isaiah 64:5.

Reason 7. From the little thought or remembrance which such a good man takes how his time spendeth, verse 20. For he doth not much remember the days of his life, which is an effect of the former joy; which is as oil to the wheels, and so makes our time to pass easily. All the days of the afflicted are evil, Proverbs 15:15, and he takes sad thoughts and remembrance of the revolution of times, Job 7:3, 4. If an evil man take as little thought and remembrance of his time, it is not comely for him; it becometh him not, Job 21:13.

Use 1. To teach good men, yea, to encourage them, to enjoy the good of their estates. It is comely for them, Psalm 33:1; not so for a wicked man, Proverbs 26:1, and 19:10. All the former reasons of the doctrine are as motives to the use.

Use 2. To teach all men, that any good which they enjoy from the creature is the gift of God; and therefore they to look to God, to enjoy the giver as well as his gift.

Use 3. To teach men to give themselves to labour, else how shall they enjoy the good of their labour?

Use 4. To teach us to number our life by days, verse 18; Genesis 47:9.

Use 5. To reckon our life, and all the days of them, as God's gift, verse 15; Lamentations 3:29.

Use 6. To teach us the way to pass away our days comfortably. It is to be good, and to enjoy the good of our labours, receiving the good of our labours, in doing good to others. In this way God answereth in joy our hearts, and we pass away our times without sad remembrances, verse 20.

CHAPTER VI.

Verse 1. *There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:*

Verse 2. *A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.*

In this chapter Solomon declareth the vanity, first, Of human society, or prosperity in outward things, verse 1–2; secondly, Of long life and store of children, verse 3–6; thirdly, Of labour, verse 7–8, &c. In these two verses Solomon setteth forth the vanity of such outward good things wherewith men are most taken—to wit, riches, wealth, honour; and these amplified, 1. By their abundance even unto satiety, so that a man wanteth nothing of all that he desireth; 2. By the evil God inflicteth upon it: God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it; 3. By the adjuncts of this estate, fourfold: first, It is an evil; secondly, It is common amongst men under the sun, verse 1; thirdly, It is a vanity; fourthly, It is an evil disease, verse 2. Riches, wealth, and honour are expressed by God himself in the same terms, 2 Chronicles 1:11. Riches differ from wealth; riches expressing revenues of the field, or cattle, which are tithable; for it is a word in the Hebrew which differeth in a prick only from tenths or tithes. Wealth, in the original, is such treasure of silver, gold, jewels, and household stuff which are not tithable. God giveth him not power to eat thereof, a metaphor and a synecdoche in eating, put for enjoying the sweetness of them; one kind of enjoying put for all. For honour cannot properly be eaten, but the sweet of them may be enjoyed.

Doctrine 1. It is a vanity and an evil, even an evil disease, an evil disease common amongst men every where, that a man receiveth from God

riches and honour of all sorts, even to the satisfaction of his soul, and yet God giveth him not power to enjoy the good of it, but leaveth it to a stranger.

Reason 1. From the unlawful getting of riches or honour by oppression, deceit, ambition, or the like, Proverbs 28:8, and 13:22; Job 27:13,16–17.

Reason 9. From the satisfaction of their hearts in

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it; which acquiescency in the creature is an idolatry which the Lord will curse, Luke 12:19–20.

Reason 3. From want of prayer to God, for a comfortable use of the blessings we do enjoy, James 4:3.

Reason 4. From the abuse of the creatures upon our lusts, James 4:3; Job 20:22.

God taketh away from a man the power to enjoy the sweet and good of it many ways: as, first, By sickness of body, Job 21:25; secondly, By scruple of conscience, as Acts 10:13–14; thirdly, By inordinate affection to some trifle, for want of which all is less comfortable, Esther 5:11–13; fourthly, By covetousness, Ecclesiastes 4:8; fifthly, By some stain of folly in a great person, which blasteth all his honour, Ecclesiastes 10:1.

Use 1. To teach us that all riches, wealth, and honour, and all the enjoyments of that good and sweet thereof, are from the Lord, 1 Chronicles 29:12.

Use 2. To ask of him therefore what we want, either of these things or of the good of them.

Use 3. To remove these evils out of God's sight, for which he is wont to deny men the good of the gifts we do enjoy.

Use 4. To bless the Lord, who giveth us any good things, and power to enjoy the good and sweet of them.

Verse 3. *If a man beget an hundred children , and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.*

Verse 4. *For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.*

Verse 5. *Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing : this hath more rest than the other.*

Verse 6. Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

In these verses Solomon declareth the vanity of two other earthly comforts: 1. Store of children; 2. Long life, which maybe accompanied and clogged with great vanity, in case two other benefits be wanting: first, The soul to enjoy good; secondly, The body to enjoy burial; which misery and vanity

he setteth forth by a comparison with an abortive, *a pari et a minore*, equal in five respects: 1. Of coming into the world with vanity, verse 4. 2. Of seeing no good, verse 6. 3. Of departing in darkness and obscurity, verse 4. 4. Of oblivion of both, verse 4. 5. Of going both to one place, verse 6. The vanity of the abortive. Less in respect, first, He hath not seen the sun; secondly, He hath not known anything to grieve him; thirdly, He hath more rest than the other, verse 5.

Doctrine 1. An old father of many children and many years, if his soul want goodness and his body burial, an abortive, or untimely birth, is as good, yea, better than he. As good in respect, 1. Of their entrance into the world; they both came in with vanity, that is, to no end. Not simply and altogether, for God hath wise and good ends of sending them both into the world, but in regard of themselves and other men. 2. Of their seeing no good in lifetime, verse 6. 3. Of their departure out of the world; they both depart in darkness: first, Of obscurity; secondly, Of misery. 4. They both are covered with darkness of oblivion, yea, sometime the name of the wicked shall rot when the other is not blemished, Proverbs 10:7. 5. Of the same place whereto they both go—to the earth from whence they came, and the wicked man to a worse place, Acts 1:25. The abortive better in respect, first, He never saw the sun, so he never saw outward good things, which might trouble him to lose; secondly, He never knew anything good or evil, so that his reckoning is more easy and his present grief less; thirdly, he enjoyeth more rest from evils both in this and in the other world, verse 5.

Reason 1. From the overpoising vanity of those two wants—first, Of burial; secondly, Of soul's want of goodness—to extinguish the comforts of, 1. Store of children; 2. Long life. Want of burial, first, Leaveth the body as dung to rot and stink upon the face of the earth, a thing, 1. Dishonourable to the dead; 2. Loathsome to the living, Psalm 83:10; 2 Kings 9:37–38; Jeremiah 21:18–19. Secondly, Leaveth the body without pledge of

resurrection; the body buried is corn sown, 1 Corinthians 15:36. The soul's want of goodness, 1. Is as a dead carcase stinking above ground, Psalm 14:3. 2. Leaveth it to more putrefaction by longer lying above ground,

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yea, the more inexcusable in impenitency, Revelation 2:21. 3. Procureth a greater damnation for living so long with so many children, and for want of goodness doth neither good to himself nor them.

Use 1. To take off men from blessing themselves in store of children and long life. Rehoboam had store of children—sons, twenty-eight; daughters, sixty—yet his soul empty of goodness, 2 Chronicles 11:21, with 12:14. Ahab had seventy sons, 2 Kings 10:1, yet they all died a violent death, verse 6–7; and their father's blood dogs did eat, 1 Kings 22:38. And though his carcase found burial, yet not so Jezebel's, 2 Kings 9:34–37.

Use 2. To moderate the grief of such as want children or have abortives, so their souls want not goodness, nor their bodies burial, they are better than these in the text.

Use 3. To look at abortion as a vanity and misery to the creature, and so at want of burial. It is a stoical apathy to despise want of burial, *Facilis jactura sepulchri: Cælo tegitur qui non habet urnam*. Solomon's porch and Venus' porch are not of equal dimensions. And if abortion be a vanity and misery, then avoid such sins as make us like them: as, first, Malignancy against God's people, joined with incorrigibleness, Psalm 58:8; secondly, Harsh and unreverent insurrection against well-deserving magistrates, Numbers 12:1–2, 12.

Use 4. To exhort to furnish the soul with goodness, which will make a blessing of life, long or short, children many or few, burial or no burial, Isaiah 65:20; Psalm 79:2. A woman fearing God is better than a woman bearing the best child, Luke 11:27, 28.

Verse 7. All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.

Verse 8. For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?

Verse 9. Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

In these verses Solomon discovereth to us the vanity of labour, which he setteth forth by four arguments. First, From the wearisomeness of it, implied in the word עמל, which is *labour—cum defatigatione et molestia*. Secondly, From the end of

it, for the mouth. Thirdly, From the emptiness or defect of it, in that the soul is not satisfied by it, verse 7; which is amplified by a distribution of the subject-person so labouring, whether he be wise or foolish, the one hath no more by his labour than the other. Yea, the poor, who is more laborious and industrious than other men; yea, the discreet and prudent poor, who knoweth how to converse and carry himself amongst men, he hath no more by his labour but to fill his mouth, yet not to fill his desire or soul, verse 8. Fourthly, From the wandering of the desire (which springeth from the soul's not being filled). This is amplified by an argument *a majori*, that it is better to enjoy the sight of the eyes—that is, to enjoy and to be content with the present estate—than to be carried on with such a walking soul or wandering desire. In regard of all which evils he counteth labour itself, with these concomitants, to be vanity and vexation of spirit, verse 9.

Doctrine. All the labour that the sons of men take in the estate of corrupt nature is a grievous or vexatious vanity, Genesis 3:17, 19. And though, by Christ and his grace, the bitterness and sting of that vanity is removed (the curse being taken away, Galatians 3:13), yet the cross still remaineth; hence Jacob's description of his life in all the years of it, and in all the days of those years, (Genesis 47:9–10; Paul, 2 Corinthians 11:27.

Reason 1. From the wearisomeness of the labour, amplified in the word עמל, which is translated *wearisomeness*, Job 7:3—to wit, 1. Fainting the body; 2. Afflicting the mind with care and grief.

Reason 2. From the end of it; it is for the mouth. The husbandman labours in the earth, the mariner in the sea, the shepherd in the field, the carpenter in the wood, the tradesman in his shop, the scholar in his book; as they are natural men, they all labour for the mouth, Proverbs 16:26.

Objection. How can this stand, seeing much labour is for the back, for apparel, or for lodging? Matthew 6:25.

Answer. First, The mouth may be put for the whole body, as sometimes bread is put for all maintenance, as well of back as belly, Genesis 3:19; Matthew 6:11.

Secondly, It is true in proper speech, taking the mouth for the chief and supreme end of labour, to which all the rest must give place in case of necessity. A man will sell his lodging and clothing,

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and all he hath, for his mouth, Genesis 47:15–19; and it is a great vanity that the divine spirit of a man should labour only for sensual things and transitory.

Reason 3. From the emptiness of the soul or appetite after all this labour. The mouth is a narrow portal, not above two or three inches square, and the stomach not above a hand-breadth square—the whole man not above five feet long; and yet, when a man hath laboured to fill all these, and provided him of store for many years, yet his mind is not satisfied, but his inordinate desire after the means of his maintenance, like a dropsy-thirst, is never filled. And thus fareth it with the learned scholar, the rich churl, the industrious and prudent poor man. These vanities fall alike to them all; how much less is the immortal soul filled!

Reason 4. From the wanderingness of the unsatisfied desire, which, like the bee, runneth from flower to flower, and sucketh honey and wax till it be laden, and yet still laboreth for more, till sometimes it be stockened in its hive through abundance of honey.

Better is the sight of the eyes, that is better is what you see before you, be it less or more, than the wandering of the desire: as the good householder saith to his guest, Much good may it do to you what you see before you.

Use 1. To remind us of the greatness of our fall in Adam, whence so much bitterness in labour and sin, for a little sweetness of the fruit of a tree, and that upon us and on all our posterity.

Use 2. To beware of such sinful labours as increase these wearisome vanities. If honest labour be so grievous and vain, how much more sinful labours! Take heed of labour to undermine and supplant well-deserving men, Proverbs 4:16; Psalm 7:14. Darius was better employed, Daniel 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

Use 3. To teach us to labour for that bread which perisheth not, but feedeth and satisfieth the soul to eternity, John 6:26–27; Revelation 2:3; Romans 16:12; Philippians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 15:10, 58.

Use 4. To teach the poor that discretion in him is observed by God and wisest princes, when he knoweth how to walk before the living.

Use 5. To wean us from wandering desires, and to learn us satisfaction and contentment in our

present estate, that is, with what we see before us, Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6.

Use 6. To raise up the country unto thankfulness to God, that supplieth us comfortably with that which men most labour for. We need not sell our clothes for bread.

Verse 10. That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

Verse 11. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?

Verse 12. For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

That which it is *quicquid fuerit* as Junius; or as Broughton, *quisquis fuerit*; or as the words and sense fitly run, *whatsoever he*, that is, *any one is, quicquid quis fuerit* it was named already (or formerly of old) and it is known to be *Adam*, &c.

Solomon summeth up the vanity of man, whosoever or whatsoever he be; he showeth what his estate is, first, By creation: 1. He is *Adam*, a piece of red earth, base and of the earth, argued by his notation; 2. Impotent to his Maker; he cannot contend with him that is mightier than he, verse 10. Secondly, By his present condition after the fall: 1. All the accessions that come upon him, learning or knowledge, honour, wealth, pleasure, long life, store of children, labour, they all increase his vanity. What is he the better, to wit, for them all? verse 11. 2. He is ignorant, first, Of what is good for him in this life, which is amplified by the simile of a shadow; secondly, Of future things: who shall tell him what shall be after him? verse 12.

Doctrine. Whatsoever the man be, it is well known, as his name is, so is he; *Adam*, a lump of clay; and whatsoever befalleth him in this life, in his natural estate, he is never the better for it, Genesis 1:26–27, and 2:7; Ecclesiastes 12:7. Clay, and so, 1. Subject to the hand of the potter, of necessity, Jeremiah 18:6; 2. Base, Psalm 49:2, and 62:9; 3. Brittle, first, In soul mutable, Job 4:18–19; secondly, In body easily subject to mortality, of itself, Job 4:19. That that which befalleth him in this life, maketh

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him not the better, is argued from the vanity of all, Ecclesiastes 1:2.

Reason 1. From his utter insufficiency and inability to contend with his Maker, verse 10. An earthen pot cannot contend with a rock, Matthew 21:44; Isaiah 45:9; Romans 9:20–21; Job 9:3, 4; where be two reasons of it: the first, From God's wisdom; the second, From his power.

Reason 2. From the increase of vanity upon man by all the accessions of this life, by gifts, 1. Of the mind, Isaiah 47:10; Jude 4; 2. Of the body, Ezekiel 16:15; implied, 3. Of outward estate, Jeremiah 22:21; Revelation 3:17; Proverbs 1:32; Ezekiel 28:4; 2 Chronicles 26:16; which springeth, first, From our corrupt nature, which, as a fusty vessel, corrupteth all that is put into it; secondly, From the curse of God upon the creatures by the fall, Genesis 3:17.

Reason 3. From the ignorance and unskilfulness of men, 1. To discern what is good for them in this momentary life, Job 11:12. We look at those things which are best for us, which are temporary, bodily, and present; whereas our souls find no good in such—as a dropsy-man chooseth drink, which is most hurtful for him. We know not how to make a good use of them so far as they might lead us, Deuteronomy 29:4. 2. To foresee or discern future things, Ecclesiastes 8:7.

Use 1. To humble the pride of man. Earthly man, whatsoever he be, he is known of old to be *Adam*; and that which more humbleth him is, that he is not the better for all that befalleth him in this life, nor doth he know what is good for him in this life, nor how to make use of it.

Use 2. To teach men not to contend with their Maker. It is hard to dash earthen pitchers against stone walls. Therefore to forbear pleadings and murmurings—1. Against God's purpose, Romans 9:20–21; 2. Against his providence, Jeremiah 12:1—we must submit patiently under God's hands, Psalm 39:9; we must obediently follow his calling, Revelation 14:4.

Use 3. To show us our life as in a glass. It is as a shadow—to wit, 1. Without substance—rather a death than a life, 1 Timothy 5:6; 2. Seeming greater when life is most remote; 3. Easily or speedily passing away, and that when it is at greatest.

Use 4. For thankfulness to God, that Christ

would take such a base estate upon him as the estate of earthly man. That so many sons of Adam meet together, yet some good agreement; else, were it not for God's special guidance and blessing, vanity put to vanity would but increase vanity, Psalm 39:5, with 62:9. The Netherlanders'

motto a wholesome advertisement, resembling themselves to a company of earthen pitchers floating in the sea, with this word, *Si collidimur frangimur*.

CHAPTER VII.

Vers 1. A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

Solomon having spoken of the vanity of sundry conditions of the creature, considered in themselves, in this he speaketh of their vanity compared one with another, wherein also he intimateth the vanity of men's judgments and imagination touching these things, as esteeming the better to be worse, and the worse to be better. In this verse he declareth two things to be better than other two, which are commonly reputed to be worse—as, first, A good name to be better than a good ointment; secondly, The day of death to be better than the birthday.

The words themselves are a proverbial doctrine: 'A good name is better than a good ointment'; yet an ointment is reckoned amongst precious riches and treasures, Isaiah 39:2; but a good name is preferred before it, Proverbs 22:1.

A good ointment, first, Is fragrant, John 12:3; secondly, Shining, and making the face to shine, Psalm 104:15; thirdly, Sinketh into the bones, and suppleth and softeneth the dried sinews and muscles, that it maketh a man more fit for race, for wrestling, or any other bodily exercise, Psalm 109:18; fourthly, Is healing, Luke 10:34; fifthly, Preserveth even after death by embalming, Luke 23:56.

In all these properties, qualities, and effects, a good name excelleth a good ointment, which may be as so many reasons of the point. A good name, first, Is more fragrant, the one filling the house, John 12:3, the other town and country, John 3:26; Romans 1:8. Secondly, Putteth a shining lustre upon the countenance, Ecclesiastes 8:1. Wisdom, which

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is a matter of reputation, Ecclesiastes 10:1, maketh the face to shine, &c. Thirdly, It sinketh into the bones, Proverbs 15:30; yea, it fitteth to any public employment, in ministry, 1 Timothy 3:7, or magistracy, Deuteronomy 1:13. Fourthly, Healeth the venom of slanders and backbitings. Fifthly, Keepeth us alive after death, Proverbs 10:7.

Objection. How can the ninth commandment be preferred before the eighth?

Answer. A good name is the honour of a man's person, and so belongeth to the fifth commandment.

Use 1. To reprove the vanity and folly of such, who, to get wealth and treasure, care not how they prostitute their good name. It was a sordid speech of *Vespasian*, *Dulcis odor lucri ex re qualibet*.

Use 2. To reprove the blemishing and blasting of any man's good name, which duly belongeth to him. It is a greater sin than to steal the best goods he hath, *Proverbs 22:1*. A tradesman's credit is oft more worth than his estate.

Use 3. To exhort to a conscionable care of getting and keeping a good name. It is not ambition nor vainglory when a man seeketh it by good means for good ends, and affecteth it no further, nor accepteth it, but as is due to him. Means of a good name: 1. Faith, *Hebrews 11:2*; 2. Fruits of faith, first, Sanctifying of God's name, *1 Samuel 2:30*; secondly, Sparing the names of our brethren, *Matthew 7:1-2*; thirdly, Humility, *Proverbs 22:4*; *Luke 14:11*; fourthly, Worthy acts for public service, *1 Samuel 18:7*; *Matthew 26:13*; *2 Chronicles 24:16*; *1 Peter 3:16*. Hence sweet odours at funerals, as a monument of a sweet smelling report, *2 Chronicles 16:14*. On the contrary, sin staineth a good name, *Proverbs 10:7*; *1 Kings 15:30*; *Matthew 10:4*; *Genesis 11:4,9*. *Absalom's pillar*, *2 Samuel 18:18*, was *Columna columniæ*; or as *Lot's wife's pillar of salt*, seasoning others, but shaming ourselves. It is not fair faces, buildings, clothes, or estates that can procure or preserve a good name.

Objection 1. Christ excelled in all virtues and duties, yet he lay under an ill name, as a glutton and winebibber, a deceiver, an enemy to *Cæsar*.

Answer. He bore our sins, and so our reproaches, as a punishment due to our sins. 2. It was amongst evil men, as his profession was also evil spoken of amongst them, *Acts 28:22*. 3. At length he

overwrestled it, and got a great name, *Philippians 2:9*.

Objection 2. But it is a curse to a minister to be generally well spoken of, *Luke 6:22,26*. *John Baptist* is said to have a devil, *Matthew 11:18*.

Answer. First, Ministers that are faithful have special cause to provoke wicked men, where their name chiefly suffereth, *1 Kings 22:8*, and *18:17*, else wisdom is justified of her children, *Matthew 11:19*; secondly, Ministers at length overwrestle it, *Matthew 23:29-30*.

Objection 3. But even private Christians, as truly godly, are traduced.

Answer. First, Sometime they neglect their life of faith, *2 Samuel 12:12-13*; secondly, God prevents sin in them by false reports; thirdly, It is but

at the hands of wicked men, Acts 28:22, and 24:25; fourthly, If it be at the hands of brethren, it is through their ignorance, emulation, and rashness, which God at length will overwrestle, Job 42:7. Otherwise God hideth the names of his children in the secret of his tabernacle from the strife of tongues, Psalm 31:20. The words are a proverbial doctrine.

Doctrine 2. The day of death is better than the birthday. This is not the speech, first, Of Job in misery, Job 3:3; secondly, Nor of Jeremiah in passion, Jeremiah 20:14; but of Solomon in his repentance. This Solomon speaketh not only of some extraordinary kinds of death which have been of more public service—as the death of Christ, John 12:32; of Samson, Judges 16:30; of the martyrs, whose blood is, first, The glory of God, John 21:19; secondly, The seed of the Church—but indefinitely and generally of the death of all or any. Better to the godly, in regard, first, Of sin, which shall then be wholly subdued, Romans 6:7; 1 Corinthians 15:26. If sin continued after death, death were not the last enemy. But in birth we are born in sin, Psalm 51:5; children of wrath, Ephesians 2:3. Yea, new birth leaveth much corruption still in us; we are born in sin, but we die in the Lord, Revelation 14:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:14. Secondly, Of misery, which attendeth birth, Job 14:1, and 5:7. But death is a haven of rest after a sea of troublesome agitation and misery, Job 3:13–14, 21–22; Revelation 14:13. Thirdly, Of grace, which will then be perfected, Hebrews 12:23; 1 Corinthians 13:12; Jude 24; Ephesians 5:27. Death is accounted an enemy to nature, but

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is a friend to grace; we are born unclean, Job 25:4; John 3:6, but we die perfect. Fourthly, Of glory. Birth is the seed-time of corruption, Galatians 6:8; death is the seed-time of incorruption and glory, 1 Corinthians 15:36, 42–44. Birth putteth us into the hands of midwives and other weak women; death into the hands of the glorious and mighty angels, Luke 16:22. Birth bringeth us forth into a valley of tears; death into our Master's joy, Matthew 25:21. Birth into an estate of absence from the Lord, 2 Corinthians 5:6; death bringeth us into his presence, 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 John 3:2. Birth bringeth us to labour, Job 5:7; death to rest, Revelation 14:13, even Sabbath rest. Birth bringeth us into a larger and fairer world than our mother's womb; but death into a larger and fairer than this. The starry roof of this world is but the pavement of that. Better to the wicked, in regard, first, Of others, Proverbs 11:10; secondly, Of

themselves, though it had been good for them not be born, Matthew 26:24; yet being born, the sooner dead, 1. The less sin; 2. The less punishment.

Question. May the wicked then do well to hasten their own deaths?

Answer. By no means; for self-murder is worse than murder of another. And besides, so the wicked cutteth himself off from means and hopes of conversion.

Use 1. Against purgatory to the godly after death. For then death setteth them into a worse condition than ever their birth did; for the pains of purgatory, as papists describe them, differ not from the pains of hell in measure of torment, but duration only. And what use can there be of purgatory, when no sin is left in death to be purged after?

Use 2. To exhort to such a life as may make our death comfortable. Means: first, Regeneration, new birth, John 11:26; Philippians 1:21; secondly, Faithful and fruitful course of life, 2 Timothy 4:6–8.

Use 3. To comfort the godly against death, by consideration of all the former benefits of death. Samson's riddle is now Solomon's paradox; out of the eater, death, which devoureth all, cometh meat and sweetness.

Objection 1. But in death I lose all my dear friends.

Answer. First, If thou hast lived any long time,

most of thy dearest friends are gone before thee; secondly, Thou shalt change these here for better friends there; our best friends love us not so dearly as every one there; thirdly, Thy good friends will not be long after thee.

Objection 2. But what shall I do with my poor children, and young?

Answer. Leave them with God, Jeremiah 49:11.

Objection 3. But there is bitterness and pangs in death.

Answer. First, So there is in birth; secondly, After comforts swallow up all griefs, John 16:21.

Use 4. To moderate the mourning of the living for their dying friends. You rejoiced in their worse day, their birthday, why not much more in their better day? 2 Samuel 12:19–20. Pharaoh and Herod solemnised their birthdays, Genesis 40:20; Mark 6:21; why should not Christians rejoice in the departure of their Christian friends? The days of the martyrs' execution were called *Natalitia*. It is true, we may mourn for loss of public good instruments to family, church, and commonwealth, and judge ourselves for such sins as provoke the Lord to remove them; but yet it is best for them that they are gone, and best for the church what God doth. The death of Joseph and Josiah turned to the best good of Israel; the

bondage of Egypt wrought for Israel a more glorious deliverance; and the captivity of Babylon, which brake in upon the death of Josiah, instead of a dungeon, proved a wine cellar, Canticles 2:4.

Verse 2. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.

As in the former verse Solomon preferred two things that seem less desirable, above other two that seem more desirable—a good name above a good ointment, and the day of death above the birthday; so here he preferreth a third thing, that may seem less desirable, before another, which to men doth commonly seem to be much more desirable. The house of feasting is commonly preferred amongst men, as more desirable to be gone unto, above the house of mourning; but here the day of mourning, even the greatest mourning, mourning for the dead, is preferred before the house of feasting. Better it is, saith he, to go to the house of mourning

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than to the house of feasting; whereof he giveth two reasons: first, From the property of the house of mourning, to wit, for the dead. It is the end of all men. Secondly, From the good use which the living will seriously make of this house of mourning, and of the cause of mourning which he there beholdeth—the death of some friend or neighbour. The living will lay it to his heart.

Doctrine 1. It is better, or a more desirable good thing, to go to a house of mourning for the dead, than to a house of feasting for the solace of the living. Of feasts there be three sorts: 1. Civil feasts, where a fourfold solace—first, Eating the fat and drinking the sweet; secondly, Loving and neighbourly company; thirdly, Pleasant discourse, and sometimes music; fourthly, Increase of mutual neighbourly love. 2. Profane or riotous, where the former comforts are abused and perverted, first, By excess in eating and drinking to gluttony and drunkenness; secondly, The company swaggering and debauched ruffians, swearing and roaring boys; thirdly, Instead of pleasant discourses, ribaldry, wanton songs and dances, abusing of the name of God or man; fourthly, Fallings out and quarrellings, or else linking in conspiracy to do some mischief. 3. Holy feasts, where, first, God's institution or special mercies invite to thankfulness, and to eat and drink as before God, Exodus 18:12; secondly, Christian company;

thirdly, Holy conference, Luke 14:1–8, and so to the end; fourthly Increase of childlike love to God, and brotherly love one to another. Of this last sort of feasts, the comparison is not put; for God's ordinances are more edifying than his providences. Nor is it to civil, especially to godly men; but of the second sort of feasts, riotous. For to honest and good men, it is a house of mourning to be in such a house of feasting, Psalm 120:5. But here he speaketh of such a house of feasting as is contrary to the house of mourning.

Reason 1. From the nature of the occasion of that mourning, it being the death of some or other desirable person in the family—that death is the end of all men. If the person dead were not desirable, there is little or no mourning for him, 2 Chronicles 21:19–20. But if there be mourning, all useful men will see their own ends in his, which is very whole

some to our spirits, Deuteronomy 32:29; Lamentations 1:9. In feasting, men are apt to put the evil day far from them, Isaiah 56:12; Amos 6:3–6.

Secondly, In the house of mourning we shall be occasioned to take to heart what we see; yea, to lay it as a plaster to our heart (text). Not so readily in a house of feasting.

Objection. But doth not the house of feasting offer to our hearts many serious and savoury meditations? Doth it not set before us, first, A spectacle of God's bounty, leading to thankfulness, Psalm 145:16, and repentance, Romans 2:4; secondly, The variety of God's goodness dispersed in the several creatures, Acts 14:17; thirdly, The wisdom of God's providence, preparing and gathering the meat and company from sundry quarters of the world, Psalm 145:15; fourthly, The large extent of Christian liberty purchased by the blood of Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:27; fifthly, The fatness and sweetness of spiritual and heavenly food, *a minori*, Luke 14:15; sixthly, A spur to enlargement of fruitfulness after a feast; we expect our horses after well meating should travel better.

Answer. It is true, a feast setteth before us many spiritual advantages; but yet, first, A man's spirit disposed to cheerfulness is more exposed to lightness; secondly, Sad objects make deeper impression upon our affections; thirdly, The company at a funeral are not so apt to draw our minds away by cheerful discourse, as at a feast.

Use 1. To reprove funeral feasts; for it maketh the house of mourning and feasting all one.

Use 2. To teach us the estate of our nature. God seeth it better for us to meet with sad and mournful occurrences than cheerful.

Use 3. To teach us so to lay to heart the death of others, that it may be better to us than the best meal's meat, better than a feast. If thou art a living man, lay sad objects to heart, especially this of death. More distinctly lay to heart, first, Death itself; secondly, The causes of it; thirdly, The effects of it; fourthly, The manner of it; fifthly, The subject of it.

In death itself see a spectacle of thine own mortality, Joshua 23:14; 1 Kings 2:2; wait therefore for a change, Job 14:14.

In the causes of it. First, Moral or deserving;

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look at sin, Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12, especially original sin. Learn to mortify that, kill that, which else will kill us soul and body. Secondly, Natural diseases; see the evil of corrupt nature and life, Romans 6:23. Thirdly, Violent: 1. From magistrates; first, Justly, learn to fear such wickedness, Deuteronomy 17:13; secondly, Unjustly, learn constancy to the death, Revelation 2:10. 2. From thieves and robbers; and then learn, (1.) To walk regularly with God, who else may and will deliver into such hands, Ezekiel 21:31; (2.) If the man slain were godly, learn to avoid the misconstructions which are wont to be made of it, Proverbs 25:26. 3. From self; either through, (1.) Distress, as Saul; (2.) Disgrace, as Ahithophel; (3.) Despair, as Judas. Hence learn patience in affliction, with faith to prevent all such evil.

In the manner of it. First, Some die, 1. Suddenly, Job 21:13, 23–24; hence learn, first, Preparation for sudden changes; secondly, Submission to reproofs, Proverbs 29:1. 2. Lingeringly, Job 21:25; hence learn not patience only, but longsuffering. Secondly, Some die distracted. Learn hence, 1. To commit our senses and understanding to God; 2. Settle peace of conscience, which will keep our minds in Christ, when not in our senses, Philippians 4:7.

In the subject. 1. Some die in sin, carnal persons; and they die, first, Either as stones, 1 Samuel 25:37–38; hence learn weanedness from worldliness, which stupefieth the heart. Secondly, Or presuming, Matthew 7:22; hence learn to build on a rock, Matthew 7:24–27. Thirdly, Or despairing, as Judas; hence learn to beware of sins against conscience. 2. Others die in Christ; and that, first, Either troubled in mind, conflicting with desertions, Matthew 27:46; hence learn to live by faith against sense, Job 12:15; Luke 23:46. Secondly, Or uncomfortably:¹ 1. Expressing their

joy and confidence, 2 Timothy 4:6–8; 2. Instructing and exhorting others, Genesis 49; hence learn, first, To live uprightly and justly, Psalm 37:37; secondly, Boldness in Christ against death, Romans 8:38–39.

Verse 3. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.

¹ Query, 'comfortably'?—ED.

Verse 4. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

Verse 5. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

Verse 6. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.

In verse 2 Solomon had preferred going to the house of mourning above going to the house of mirth, whereof he gave two reasons before; the first taken from the condition of the house of mourning: it is the end of all men. The second from the spiritual improvement which living men will make of it: 'The living will lay it to heart', verse 2. Now in this verse he giveth another reason of it. 3. From the pre-eminence of sorrow above laughter: 'Sorrow is better than laughter.' And this he proveth, first, From the benefit of a sad countenance: 'By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better', verse 3. Secondly, From the pre-eminence of such men, whose hearts are in the house of mourning, above those whose hearts are in the house of mirth: 'The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, the hearts of fools in the house of mirth', verse 4. Thirdly, From the pre-eminence of hearing the rebuke of the wise, which causeth sorrow, above hearing the song of fools, verse 5; the vanity whereof is amplified by a comparison, verse 6. כעם, here translated *sorrow* cometh of a root which signifieth properly to provoke, as Deuteronomy 32:19. Now, because a man may be provoked either to anger or to grief, therefore this word is sometimes translated *anger* Ecclesiastes 7:9; sometimes *grief* or *sorrow* as Ecclesiastes 11:10; Psalm 112:10; and here.

Doctrine. Sorrow is better than light mirth, verse 3. Laughter expresseth light or frolic mirth.

For right understanding this point, consider these points: First, Sorrow when God calleth for mirth, and joy and mirth and laughter when God calleth for sorrow and mourning, are both alike odious to God, Deuteronomy 28:47–48; Genesis 4:6; Isaiah 22:12–14; Jeremiah 48:27. Secondly, Godly sorrow and mourning, and spiritual joy and rejoicing, are both alike acceptable to God and profitable to a man, 2 Corinthians 7:10–11; Nehemiah 8:10. Thirdly, Sorrow for sin, and upon rebukes for sin, is better than frolic joy and mirth in vain company, Ecclesiastes 7:5. Fourthly, Sorrow for outward affliction is better

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than light mirth for slight occasions. These two latter hold forth Solomon's meaning, and are the sense of the doctrine, Hebrews 11:25; Job 36:21.

Reason 1. From the benefit of a sad countenance. As it springeth from a heart seriously affected, so it stirreth up serious affections, meditations, and conferences in the hearts of others. A merry countenance is apt to stir up to loose and dissolute, vain and frothy meditations, affections, conferences.

Reason 2. From the condition of the house of mourning; it is a suitable object to the heart of a wise man: his heart is there. Sad objects to the heart are as ballast to the ship, making it to go steady; whereas the house of mirth is a suitable object to the heart of fools, verse 4.

Reason 3. From the pre-eminence or betterment of hearing the rebuke of the wise, which causeth sorrow, than the song of fools, which causeth light mirth, verse 5; which may appear, 1. From the great benefit of wise reproofs. They are as, first, Pricks to let out corruption, Acts 2:37; secondly, Goads to stir up to duty, Ecclesiastes 12:11; thirdly, Nails to drive in and fasten good counsel, Ecclesiastes 12:11; fourthly, Balm to heal sores, Psalm 141:5. 2. From the vanity of fools' laughter and light mirth. It is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, verse 6; not like the fire of thorns under a pot, which is soon kindled and fair blazed, but like the noise, which first is no good melody. Secondly, Spends much fuel, as fools' mirth much time. Thirdly, Soon decayeth and dampeth, and leaveth both meat in the pot raw, and bystanders not thoroughly warmed, Psalm 118:12, and 58:9. So doth the mirth of fools, Proverbs 15:13.

Use 1. Against the chief good of epicures, which is pleasure. Sadness is better than it.

Use 2. To teach us contentment, yea, and thankfulness too, when God sendeth occasions of sorrow and sadness for affliction, Job 1:21.

Objection. Psalm 35:27.

Answer. Prosperity that will best hold and least corrupt, is that which is sown in tears, Psalm 126:5–6. This sad winter Christmas, as they call it, is better than all the carnal jollity wont heretofore to be exercised at that time of the year.

Use 3. For a sign of trial of our hearts. Where they delight to be, such they are. If they delight

to be in the house of mirth, they are vain and foolish; if in the house of mourning, they are wise, Matthew 6:21.

Use 4. To teach us who are fittest instruments to dispense reproofs—wise men, verse 5; Proverbs 15:12. The wise and the reprover are synonyma, Proverbs 25:12. Great wisdom requisite to discern, first, Of faults, whether beams or motes; secondly, Of the offenders, how more or less easy to be wrought upon, as the body in physic, Proverbs 17:10.

Use 5. To exhort to patient and wiling hearing of just reproofs: a sound chiding is better music than the song of fools. It is an ornament if well heard, Proverbs 25:12, as arguing humility, wisdom, sincerity, or fondness, Proverbs 9:8–9. Sound flesh will abide rubbing; not so galled. They are the way of life, Proverbs 10:17, and wisdom, Proverbs 15:22,31.

Verse 7. Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

Translated *surely*. I do not find that ever the conjunction so signifieth in Scripture, but as it is translated in verse 6, for so it is fitly to be translated here. *Surely* neither standeth with the grammar or logic of the text: no coherence will so be made of the sentence. But translate it *for* and the context runs thus: Solomon had said, verse 5, It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than the song of fools.

This he proveth, first, From the vanity of the song of fools, illustrated by a simile taken from the crackling of thorns under a pot, verse 6. Of this was spoken in the former verse.

Secondly, From the madness of the oppression of such a reprover. To oppress a wise reprover, 1. Makes a wise man mad: a wise man, whether

it be, 1. The reprov'd—he will grow outrageous by oppressing his reprov'er, as did Asa, 2 Chronicles 16:10. 2. The reprov'er—oppression may distemper him, Jeremiah 20:7–9, and 14–18. Secondly, Destroys the heart, or life, of the gift. Gift cannot properly or grammatically be the nominative case before the verb, but by anomaly; for it is of the feminine gender, the verb *destroy* of the masculine; neither is the sense so suitable here.

Thirdly, From the excellency of the end of a word,

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דבר, to wit, the word of reproof, above the beginning of it; the beginning of it may be harsh and unpleasant, but the end of it is wholesome and medicinable, verse 8.

Fourthly, From the excellency of the patient in spirit (as otherwise, so especially in hearing and bearing the reproofs of the wise) above the proud in spirit, verse 8. Whereupon he inferreth a grave and wise admonition, not to be of a hasty spirit to anger, neither in hearing reproofs, nor generally in any other case, taken from the proper subject of the residence of anger: for 'anger resteth in the bosom of fools', verse 9.

Doctrine It is better to hear and bear the rebuke of the wise with submission and patience, than with oppression and passion, with pride and anger. This seemeth to be the very proper scope of Solomon's words in this place, 2 Samuel 12:7–13; 2 Chronicles 19:2–4; 1 Kings 22:8, 'Let not the king say so'; Matthew 16:23; Galatians 3:11–14.

Reason 1. From the madness that a wise man shall fall into by oppressing a wise reprov'er; in that, first, He will distemper and enrage himself, 2 Chronicles 16:10. Secondly, He will destroy the heart and life of the gift of reproof. It will no more profit than physic vomited up, or a plaster cast aside. Thirdly, He may also distemper and enrage the reprov'er, Jeremiah 20:7–9, 14–20. At least it will force him to keep silence, Amos 5:10, 13. This may be referred to the second.

Reason 2. From the excellency of the word of reproof in the end, above what it appeareth in the beginning, Psalm 114:5; Proverbs 38:33. Physic may be bitter and loathsome at first, yet health by it recompenseth that.

Reason 3. From the excellency of the patient in spirit, above the proud in spirit, verse 8. Patience, first, Possesseth the soul, Luke 21:19; secondly, Inheriteth promises, Hebrews 6:12; thirdly, It maketh us perfect, James 1:4.

Reason 4. Implied in the text, verse 8, from the root of all rejection of reproof, which is pride of spirit, Proverbs 13:1, and 15:12. Pride, first,

God abhorreth, and scorneth, and resisteth, 1 Peter 5:5; Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 3:34. Secondly, Is the presage of sudden destruction, Proverbs 29:1.

Use 1. To teach us to eschew all oppression, especially

of our reprovers. It argueth us and maketh us mad, Proverbs 28:16; it discourageth a reprovor from putting forth the faithfulness of his brotherly love, Jeremiah 20:9; Amos 5:13; yea, he is now excused in his silence, Matthew 7:6; it eateth out the heart and life of a gift, of the reproof given, 1 Kings 22:8,27–28; 2 Kings 5:12–13.

Use 2. To teach us to be patient in hearing and bearing reproofs, The end of them is better than the beginning; the beginning may seem harsh and bitter, but the end is wholesome and comfortable, as of all afflictions, Hebrews 12:11; 2 Corinthians 1:6–7, and chapters 7–11. It is not meant of all things universally that their end is better than their beginning, for it is otherwise in some things, 2 Peter 2:20; Matthew 12:45; Proverbs 20:21; but it holdeth in this duty of admonition, and all afflictions inward and outward to the godly. All impatience here argueth pride of spirit, as appeareth by the opposition, text, verse 8.

Use 3. To teach us to express patience rather than pride, and to prefer it both in our judgments and in our practice. ארך רוח is a man of a long breath, which argueth a patient spirit. Men of a short breath are soon hot; men of hot hearts breathe quick and short, as in choleric and aguish men. Patient in spirit exceeds the proud, first, In understanding and wisdom, Proverbs 17:27; קר רוח *frigidus spiritu*, a man of a cool spirit is of great understanding. Secondly, In strength and courage, Proverbs 25:28, and 16:32. Thirdly, In honour, Proverbs 22:4. Fourthly, In profiting by all means of grace: in word, Luke 8:15; in affections, Romans 5:3–5. Some think it their excellency and magnanimity to bear no coals at any man's hand, but to give every man as good as he brings. Patience they condemn for cowardice, but the Spirit of God judgeth otherwise.

Verse 9. *Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.*

Doctrine 1. To be of a hasty spirit to anger, God forbids it to his people, Proverbs 14:17; James 1:19; Proverbs 16:32. The spirit is hasty to anger when anger ariseth, first, Without cause, Genesis 4:5–6; Jonah 4:9; this is hastening before the cause. Secondly, Without measure; passing the bounds,

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1. Of our calling, Acts 7:26–27; Genesis 34:25, with 49:7; 2. Of love—first, As when instead of brotherly admonition we fall to clamour, railing, scolding, not reproving sin by Scripture names and arguments, but vexatious terms, Ephesians 4:31; secondly, When we are not fit to pray for those we are angry with, Exodus 32:29–32; 1 Samuel 8:6, with 12:23, and 15:35. 3. Of reason, Luke 6:11; Acts 22:23; 2 Chronicles 28:9. 4. Of justice, Zechariah 1:15. 5. Of due season: (1.) After sun-setting, Ephesians 4:26–27; (2.) After the offender's acknowledgment of his offence, Luke 17:3–4. And these are hasting before the measure or proportion of the cause.

Reason 1. From the proper subject of the residence and rest of anger; it resteth in the bosom of fools. Text, wherein Solomon takes off an excuse which men are wont to make of their foolishness: Though I be somewhat hasty, yet I thank God anger doth not rest with me. Yes, saith Solomon, if thou beest hasty, anger resteth with thee, and argueth thee a fool. For a man could not have anger so ready at hand hastily if it did not rest with him; the habit of sinful anger resteth there, though the act be quickly transient.

Objection. Choleric men are soon stirred, and yet they are not all fools. The fools are commonly sanguine, as the simple, light, fond-fool; or phlegmatic, as the dull ass-fool; or melancholic, as the lunatic fool.

Answer. A choleric fool is a frantic fool. Every complexion in excess is subject to folly, yea, to madness; but if choler be subdued to reason, choleric men, though they could be soon hasty if they see cause, yet will not be where there is none. A man of quick speed for race yet will not run till he see cause.

Question. But what folly is in anger?

Answer. First, Rashness, Isaiah 32:4; secondly, Stiffness, Jonah 4:9—blind wilfulness; thirdly, Outrageousness, Proverbs 27:4; fourthly, Unprofitableness. Anger unfitteth a man, first, To do good, James 1:28; secondly, To take good, 2 Kings 5:12. As a man, when his house is all on alight fire, himself in the midst of it, can hear no direction given him from without, nor himself able to do aught within; so is a man in a burning anger neither able to direct himself, nor to take counsel from others.

Reason 2. From the image of God, which should I shine forth in us. He is slow to anger, Psalm 103:8.

Use. To cast discouragement, as it were cool water, upon this angry passion. The sea, when it foameth and rageth, purgeth itself, and a pot

boiling casteth out foam and scum, but a man boiling with anger and wrath, both uttereth his own shame, and yet keepeth the filth within. Physicians count it a sign of deadly ague, when the sickness or distemper so altereth the countenance that you cannot know the same man, so Job 14:20. Anger will do as much, Daniel 2:19. Physicians will also say it is a sign of the healing and abatement of an ague, when in a hot fit the tongue is clean; but if the tongue be foul, it is a sign the disease is still strong. When a man in his anger giveth never a foul word, it is a sign of a healthful spirit; but the soul is distempered, if the speech in anger be foul. If a glass bottle be full of clean water, though it be stirred, there ariseth no mud; but if mud arise when it is stirred, the water was foul in the bottom: so is the spirit of a man foul within, that being stirred sheweth distemper. Let therefore all hastiness to anger against all sorts of persons at all times be eschewed. For Solomon here limiteth it to none: be it against husband or wife, child or servant, friends or enemies. 2. Yet this hindereth not just anger, Ephesians 4;26; 3. But it much more condemneth all malice, hatred, study of revenge, for all these are from anger resting in the bosom.

Verse 10. Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.

Solomon in this chapter hath hitherto showed the vanity of sundry things of good account in the world, in comparison of other things of less esteem; and hath therefore preferred, first, A good name before a good ointment; secondly, The day of death before the birthday; thirdly, To go to the house of mourning before going to the house of feasting; fourthly, To hear the rebuke of the wise before the song of fools. In this verse he goeth on with the like argument, not preferring elder times before the present, though men generally are apt so to do. Parts two: 1. A prohibition of taking it for granted that elder times are better than these, and of the inquiry

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after the reason of it. Say not thou, What is it that the former times were better than these? 2. A reason of the prohibition, taken from the want of wisdom in such an apprehension and inquiry; for thou dost not inquire wisely, or out of wisdom, concerning this.

Doctrine 1. The ordinary conceit that men have of the excellency of former times above these, and their ordinary inquiry into the reason

thereof, is not out of wisdom. Heathen authors may be quoted, not for divine or evangelical points, but natural or moral. Both heathen and Christians are wont to have such a conceit, that former times were better. Horace's old man is *laudator temporis acti se puero*. Again, saith he, *Damnosa quid non imminuit dies? Ætas parentum pejor avis tulit nos nequiores mox daturos progeniem vitiosiore*. Bœtius (*de consolatione philosophiæ*), *Fortunata nimium prior ætas, &c.*

Thus ordinarily men extol the cheapness of former times—their great hospitality, their kind neighbourhood, their honest dealing, their skilful workmanship, none such now-a-days; their liberal alms-deeds, their devout piety, their deep wisdom, their valiant acts. The reasons which men are wont to give of it are not wise: as, first, *Lassa efæta natura*; the decay of the strength and goodness of nature in the world and all the creatures. But this is no good reason; for nature decayed by the flood, yet the times have been better. Secondly, The goodness of the old religion, Jeremiah 44:17–18. The heathen thought the empire flourished more under the worship of Jupiter, and other false gods, than under Christian religion. The devouter papists think the same—that it was a better world under their religion than ours; but if the old religion have been worse, the following times may be worse for their sins, Jeremiah 41:21–23. Thirdly, The change of times which some think are always for the worse; so Emanuel Sa. But neither times nor stars were made to rule us.

Reason of the want of wisdom of such a conceit and such inquiry. First, From the like estate of former times as of these; no new thing under the sun, Ecclesiastes 1:9.

Secondly, From the cause of the worse appearance of present times, from fond mistakings. As, first, In youth want of judgment to discern and judge of

good or evil; thy judgment then was green and raw. Young men's spirits are green and cheerful; and so looking through a green glass, as it were, thou sawest all things green and pleasant. Old men are splenetic and sad, and see all things through dark and sad fumes, and so accordingly think hardly of them; besides, by better experience, old men now can discern much evil which before they could not observe. Secondly, Through ignorance of history, which speaketh of as had times as ours; or else through the choice that historians make to tell of notable matters, and neglect common occurrences. Besides, it is pleasant to read in stories of great wars and exploits; but to feel them would seem tragical. Thirdly,

Through following sense in this conceit, evils present seem worst; as in governments, so in the whole life of man. Fourthly, Through discontentment with a man's own personal condition, and envy at others, and vainglory in ourselves; hence Nestor, *Oh miti præteritos referat si, &c. Vitio malignitatis humanæ vetera semper in laude præsentia fastidio esse*, Tacitus. Fifthly, Through curiosity, whilst men look more at others than themselves; whereas if every man laboured to amend himself, the times would soon amend.

Reason 2. From the true estate of this matter, which may be discerned and observed in these particulars: first, When princes and people are good in God's sight, the times are better, 2 Chronicles 15:1–6; Proverbs 29:2; when they are wicked, then worse, *ibid.*; Jeremiah 22:15–18; Leviticus 26 throughout; Deuteronomy 28. David's time better than Saul's, but Rehoboam's afterwards worse. Secondly, When churches are well administered, and encouraged therein, the times are better, else worse, Hosea 2:16–23, with verses 8–9. Thirdly, Sometimes the times are better for some thing, and worse for others, both formerly and after David's time better than Solomon's for war and noble victories; Solomon's better for peace and plenty, and building and merchandise. In the same times, one place may be growing better, when another groweth worse; Ephesus may be decaying, when Thyatira increaseth, Revelation 2:4, 19. Some in every age are good; even now there be men *antiqua fide priscis moribus*; and some in every age are naught.

Reason 3. From the principal cause of all passages

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in the world; which is not man's weakness or goodness, but chiefly the wise, and strong, and good providence of God, who presenteth every age with a new stage of acts and actors, 1 Corinthians 4:9. And if a poet would not present his spectators but with choice variety of matters, how much less God?

Objection. Nebuchadnezzar's image may seem to imply a decay of each age, from gold to silver, from silver to brass, at last to iron, Daniel 2:31–33.

Answer. First, This image concerned times four hundred years after Solomon's days. Secondly, After all those monarchies destroyed, the latter times will be best, Daniel 7:27, with 2:44. Thirdly, The image doth not decipher the manners—to wit, virtues or vices—of the times, but the several conditions of the monarchies. That of Babel being more full of majesty, Daniel 4:36, and peace, Jeremiah 29:7; that of Persia inferior

herein, Daniel 9:25, troublous times; that of Macedonia making strong and loud noise like brass; that of Rome crushing all the former like iron.

Use 1. To teach us to observe the depravation of nature in the blindness of our minds; who are so far from discerning spiritual things, 1 Corinthians 2:14, that we cannot rightly judge of moral or civil things, Romans 1:21; Jude 10; Genesis 6:5.

Use 2. To reprove the fond admiration of elder times. Though there be use of antiquity, and of the study of antiquity, yet not to approve all their sayings and doings as best.

Use 3. To stir us up to a wise consideration of our present times, and the amendment thereof. For this end, first, Every one to endeavour to amend one, and as many more as are under their charge, Joshua 24:15. Secondly, Consider and see to the good administration of churches. If Joseph in the house of Jacob be sold into Egypt, look for a public famine. Thirdly, Let magistrates and courts walk in righteousness and peace; the whole country fareth the better for it.

Verse 11. Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun.

Verse 12. For wisdom is a defence and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

Solomon, in the former verse, having judged it to

spring from want of wisdom, to conceive the former times to be always better than the latter, and to inquire, as men ordinarily do, of the reason thereof, he giveth in these and the following verses three several observations touching the better and worse estate of one age above another; as at any time, so for his own time. First, For his own time, wherein wisdom and wealth abounded, he telleth us not that it was better than other times, but that it was, so far forth, a good time. Wisdom, saith he, is good with an inheritance, and profitable for men, verse 11. And this he proveth, 1. From the benefits which either of them yield apart. Wisdom is a defence, or rather a protection or refreshing, and money is the like, verse 12. 2. From the more excellent benefit of wisdom. But the excellency of wisdom is, it giveth life to the owners of it, verse 12. Secondly, He calleth us to consider the work of God in the estate of the times, as in his own age, so in every age; and the insufficiency of any man to make straight that

which God hath made crooked, verse 13, and therefore to make a good use of the vicissitude of changes from age to age, verse 14. Thirdly, He declareth that in the best times—at least, in his own time—he hath seen much evil, which he specifieth, verse 15 to the end of the chapter; and some good, verses 19,28.

Doctrine 1. Wisdom and wealth are then most profitable (or do then most good), when they are enjoyed together (or when they are met together). It is then best for any person in whom they are so met, and best for any age, when the same age enjoyeth both. Thus much God implieth in his blessing of Solomon, 1 Kings 3:10–13; for he preferreth Solomon above all former and present kings in respect of the concurrences of both these.

Reason 1. From the defect that is found in either wisdom or wealth alone. Of wisdom alone, first, It is not heard nor regarded, Ecclesiastes 9:16; secondly, It seldom getteth up to such places of authority where it may put forth itself, Proverbs 19:7. He wants friends to speak and make way for him. Of wealth alone, first, It lieth unprofitably by us, neither doing ourselves or others that good it might, Proverbs 17:16; Luke 8:14; secondly, It maketh men worse, Ecclesiastes 5:13, proud, 1 Timothy 6:17, covetous, Habakkuk 2:5, and churlish, 1 Samuel 25:10,

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11; thirdly, It exposeth us to contempt, 1 Samuel 25:25.

Reason 2. From some benefit in either of them alone. Wisdom is a defence, the word is *a shadow* in the text; which is, first, For defence, Psalm 17:8; secondly, For refreshing, Isaiah 25:4–5. Wealth is a defence and refreshing, 1. Against hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness, and injuries of suits. 2. Procuring us many friends, Proverbs 14:20, and many other outward comforts, Ecclesiastes 10:19. Wisdom is a defence and refreshing, first, As conveying us under the wings of Christ, Matthew 7:24–25; and so, 1. Giving life to us, and direction to our way; 2. Defending us from sin, hell, wrath, Job 28:28, and afflictions and evils, Proverbs 22:35; Secondly, Counselling others for their good, Ecclesiastes 10:10.

Reason 3. From the complete profit of both wisdom and wealth together. For, 1. Wisdom employeth wealth to the best advantage, both for another world, Luke 16:8–9, and for this world: First, For ourselves and others in the education of children; secondly, In peace and war, Proverbs 24:5–6. 2. Wealth employeth wisdom to the best advantage. It is a crown to the wise, Proverbs 14:24; a crown for honour and authority, Hosea 13:1. Job

having lost his wealth, lost his honour and authority, Job 29 throughout, compared with chapter 30:1,9–13.

Use 1. To refute the popish opinion of the perfection of the estate of voluntary poverty.

Use 2. To show us the feeble and comfortless estate of such as want both wisdom and wealth.

Use 3. To teach wise men to seek for wealth, and wealthy men for wisdom, and all that want both to seek both. If either alone be so helpful, how much more both together. If either alone be defective, not so both together.

Use 4. To teach such as would marry to seek both these together, if they may be had. But let the wealthy man rather seek a wise wife, as David did Abigail, than a wealthy.

Use 5. To teach us what use to make of them both together, for a defence and refreshing.

Use 6. To prefer wisdom above wealth; wisdom is the more excellent, as giving life, text. If we trust in the shadow of wealth, we shall find it, like Jonah's gourd, failing us when we have most need,

Proverbs 11:4; therefore crack not thy conscience for wealth, Proverbs 10:2.

Verse 13. Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?

Verse 14. In the day of prosperity be joyful but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other to the end that man should find nothing after him.

Doctrine. Whatsoever the estate of times be, it is our part to consider the work of God as so disposing the times, and in setting good and evil times one against another; and accordingly in good times to be in goodness, and in ill times to look at God's hand as only able to amend therein. As who should say, Look not at the creature as the chief agent in the estate of the times, but consider his hand in all estates, and make use of them, as his hand leadeth unto, Job 1:21.

1. It is God's work, first, To send, 1. Good times, 2 Chronicles 2:11; 2. Evil times, Proverbs 28:2. Secondly, To set good and evil times in a vicissitude or interchange, one contrary over against another, Jeremiah

18:7,9. In good times, first, God maketh men's, or at least some chief men's, hearts and ways right before him, 1 Samuel 13:14; secondly, God giveth them a right course, and good success in their proceedings, Jeremiah 22:15–16; 2 Chronicles 17:3–5. In evil times, first, God giveth men up to the crookedness of their own hearts and ways, Psalm 125:5, and 81:11–12; 2 Chronicles 28:1; secondly, God sendeth them cross and crooked issues of their ways, 2 Chronicles 28:1–6, 16–20; Jeremiah 22:17–19; Psalm 18:26.

2. God setteth these good and evil times interchangeably one against another. Saul's times were bad; the times of David and Solomon good. Rehoboam and Abijam bad; Asa and Jehoshaphat good. Joram and Joash bad; Uzziah and Jotham good. Ahaz bad; Hezekiah good. Manasseh and Amon bad; Josias good; his successors to the captivity bad, after the captivity good.

Reason 1. From God's people's abuse of prosperity unto self-confidence, Psalm 30:6–7, and luxury, Deuteronomy 32:15; hence followeth calamity and adversity

Reason 2. From the humiliation and reformation

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of God's people in adversity, Hosea 5:15, with 6:1–2.

Reason 3. To the end we should find nothing after God, as in the text—to wit, first, No stability in the creature, but unsettled vicissitudes; secondly, No fault in God and his administrations. So the phrase and word is taken, John 14:30; Job 31:7.

3. Accordingly it is our parts in good times to be in goodness, verse 14. It implieth, first, To be in a good frame; secondly, To take a good course; thirdly, To be of good cheer or comfort to be joyful; as husbandmen make hay when the sun shineth, and mariners hoist up and spread abroad their sails when the wind bloweth fair, Acts 9:31.

Reason 1. From God's expectation of store of good fruit in such times, Isaiah 5:1–4.

Reason 2. From God's sudden change of times, when they are thus abused, Isaiah 5:5–6; Deuteronomy 28:47–48.

In evil times to look at God's hand, as only able to amend them, Proverbs 21:1.

Reason 1. From God's sovereign power over, first, Men's hearts, Proverbs 21:1; secondly, The change of times, Acts 1:7; Psalm 31:15.

Reason 2. From the unprofitableness of all the use of creature means and helps without God, Isaiah 22:8–14; Hosea 5:13–14; 2 Chronicles 28:20–21.

Use 1. To teach us in all the estate of times not to look so much at the creatures or instruments, but at the hand of God. If princes be wicked, God giveth such, and the people into their hands, Hosea 13:11; Zechariah 11:6. If princes be good, the Lord giveth such as a favour to his people, 2 Chronicles 2:11. Heathens could say, *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit.*

Use 2. To teach us, whatever the times be, not to look at them as unchangeable; for God will set one of them contrary to another, and we know not how soon.

Use 3. To teach us therefore in good times to be in goodness—that is, first, Be in a good and thankful frame; secondly, Take a good course, Acts 9:31—be fruitful; thirdly, Be of good comfort. Break off from sinful courses; it will prolong tranquillity, Daniel 4:7.

Use 4. To teach us in ill times not chiefly to quarrel the creature, much less to quarrel God's providence, Isaiah 8:21; neither to imagine that

we can redress the evil of the times by our own wisdom or power. No; look we rather up to God, who can make straight that which is crooked, both in men's hearts, ways, or estates; and therefore use we such means as may prevail with him so to do.

Means: first, Let our uncircumcised hearts be humbled to accept of the punishment of our iniquities, and to confess our iniquities, and the iniquities of our fathers, Leviticus 26:40–41, where we have confession and contrition; secondly, Look up to Christ our Redeemer, the prince of the kings of the earth, to deliver us, Judges 10:15; thirdly. Serious reformation, Judges 10:15.

Verse 15. All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness.

Verse 16. Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?

Verse 17. Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?

Verse 18. It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.

Coherence, see in verses 11–12.

Doctrine. In the best times of church and commonwealth, a wise man may observe there are just men that perish in their righteousness, and there are wicked men that continue long in their wickedness. By perishing, sundry understand crushing and breaking, or oppression in their righteousness, in their righteous and just cause; as Naboth in Ahab's time, 1 Kings 21:13; and Ahimelech in Saul's time, 1 Samuel 22:16, 18–19. But it will be hard, if not impossible, to show such an instance in Solomon's time, though in David's time Uriah so perished; but that was before Solomon was born. But he speaketh of what he had seen in his time. By a wicked man continuing long in his wickedness, they understand prolonging his days or his life in wickedness; but his life is not in the text. And if that were the sense, it would cross his reason which he giveth in verse 17, why they should not continue long in wickedness; taken from the shortness of

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the lives of such; for why shouldst thou die before thy time? I take it therefore by a just man is meant, such a just man as is just in his own righteousness, | and at last decayeth and perisheth in it. The same I word is translated *void*, Deuteronomy 32:28; void of counsel, is perishing in their counsels. So the rich man is said to fade away and perish in his ways, as the flower perisheth and fadeth in the heat of the sun, Job 8:11. Thus the Jews, establishing their own righteousness, Romans 10:3, perished in their righteousness, and did not obtain the righteousness of Christ, Romans 11:7, and 9:31–32. And thus Solomon might observe many in his age; and like enough an eminent man in the church, Abiathar the high priest, 1 Kings 2:26–27. Ezekiel observed many such in his time, Ezekiel 18:24. That many do continue long in their wickedness, appeareth by Solomon's testimony, Ecclesiastes 8:12; by David's, Psalm 68:21; by Job's, chapter 3:2; by Isaiah, chapter 65:20.

Reasons of the just man's perishing in his righteousness: 1. From the carnalness of such a just man's heart; his nature is not born anew, but only awed by some power, either of, first, Legal terrors, Deuteronomy 5:27; secondly, Good education, 2 Chronicles 24:2, 17–18; thirdly, Good company. Such as return to evil, were always dogs and swine, though washed and cleansed, 2 Peter 2:18, 22.

Reason 2. From God's rejection of all self-confidence, Jeremiah 2:27; Luke 18:9,14; 1 Samuel 2:9.

Reason 3. From the power of the spirit of the gospel to blow upon and wither all his carnal and moral excellency, Isaiah 40:6–8.

Reason 4. From the stability only of faith in Christ, and the righteousness of faith, Isaiah 7:9; 2 Corinthians 1:24; Romans 11:20.

Reasons of the wicked's long continuance in wickedness: 1. From the suitableness of it to our nature, Genesis 6:5; Job 15:16; Jeremiah 11:15.

Reason 2. From God's judicial leaving of men to their own ways, especially after refusal of means of grace, Ezekiel 24:13; Revelation 22:11.

Use 1. Not to be righteous overmuch, verse 16—that is, first, Do not continue in this righteousness, in the same sense as be not wicked overmuch; secondly, Make not too much of it; for upon trial, it neither is our righteousness, Philippians 3:7–8, nor a

good evidence of it; trust not in it, Luke 18:9. It is a mercy if God shake us out of it. A double shaking is requisite to enjoy a settled kingdom: shaking, first, Of our earth, which was by the law, Hebrews 12:26; secondly, Of our heaven, which is by the conviction of our righteousness, in which we place our heaven upon earth, to be loss and dross till we come to partake in Christ, and faith in him.

Use 2. Not to be wicked overmuch,—that is, not to multiply wickedness by continuing long in it; not make more of wickedness than it is worth by promising ourselves rest in it, Deuteronomy 29:19; Psalm 36:2; nor make yourselves more wicked than you are, as Cain did, by despair, Genesis 4:13.

Use 3. To humble us in the sense of the corruption of our nature, who are sooner weary of our righteousness than of our wickedness. In the one we decay, in the other we continue long.

Verse 16. Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?

Verse 17. Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?

Verse 18. It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.

In the former verse Solomon delivered his third observation touching the estate of the present times, to wit, what notable things he had observed in his own time. First, That he had observed in the days of his vanity a just man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man holding out long in his wickedness; a second, see verse 19; a third, see verse 20; a fourth, see verses 21–22; a fifth, see verses 23–24; a sixth, see verses 25–26. But from that first observation Solomon inferreth a double corollary, first, Against excessive righteousness, which he dissuadeth from, 1. By the disease accompanying it, which is overmuch wisdom; 2. By the danger following it: Why wilt thou destroy thyself? Secondly, Against continuance and growth in wickedness, which he dissuadeth from, first, By the disease accompanying it, folly; be not foolish. Secondly, By the danger following it, untimely death, verse 17; and urgeth the acceptance of both these counsels by two motives: 1. By the goodness of both; 2. By

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the help of God to eschew both the contrary evils, verse 18: be not righteous overmuch. First, Some take this and the next verse to be spoken by Solomon in the person of an epicure or carnal politician: seeing righteous men do sometime perish in their righteousness, when wicked men prolong their days in wickedness, it is a good course not to be over-just. And yet, lest that should seem too gross and offensive, it is a good course also not to be over-wicked, but to keep a mean between both. But if Solomon spake in the person of the wicked, he would not second it with his own approbation of the goodness of both courses, verse 18. Besides, Solomon would not leave such corrupt counsel without some aspersion of folly or vanity upon it, as he doth in the like case, Ecclesiastes 4:5–6. Verse 5 showeth verse 6 to be spoken in the person of the slothful man.

Secondly, Others think by just overmuch he meaneth rigorously just, who will remit no punishments, nor debts, nor rights, but exact justice to extremity. And, indeed, had David punished Joab for his murder of Abner and Amasa, he had destroyed himself, 2 Samuel 3:39. But that overmuch righteousness is opposed to clemency or moderation, whereas this here is opposed to wickedness.

Thirdly, Others therefore understand the righteousness here spoken of to be *universalis justitia* universal righteousness, opposite to all wickedness. But neither can that be the meaning of the word here; for, 1. No man can exceed in that righteousness, he cannot be overmuch righteous in

that sense—no, though he were as righteous as angels, as Christ Jesus, yea, infinitely righteous as God is; Psalm 16:3, 'to the excellent'. 2. Neither can a man in Scripture phrase be said to perish in that righteousness though he should die for it. Stephen dying for his righteousness, or any other martyr, is never said to perish in his righteousness, but to glorify God, John 21:18–19; yea, and to honour and prefer himself, 2 Timothy 2:12; 2 Corinthians 4:1 7. But in Scripture phrase a man is said to perish in his iniquity, Joshua 32:20.

Fourthly, It remaineth therefore that by overmuch righteousness is meant righteousness over and above the rule of the word, as by overmuch wisdom, coupled herewith, is meant wisdom above that which is written, 1 Corinthians 4:6. Of this over-

much righteousness there be three sorts: 1. That which is called legal righteousness; so called, not because it is answerable to the law, but because justiciaries take it so, as Paul sometimes did, and other Jews and papists, Philippians 3:6.

Question 1. But how can this be overmuch, which is over-little?

Answer. As wisdom is called overmuch, which yet falleth short of true wisdom.

Question 2. Wherein standeth the over-muchness of this righteousness?

Answer 1. In a man's overmuch esteem of it, and overmuch confidence of his own estate by it; he taketh it to be true righteousness, whereas it is neither true justification, Philippians 3:7–8, nor sanctification, or inherent righteousness, Matthew 5:20. 2. In a man's overmuch confidence of his ability by the strength of it; the Israelites by it undertook and vowed universal obedience, which, without a better heart, they could not perform, Deuteronomy 27:29. As, first, When we presume to walk in the strength of it, and not by faith in Christ, Matthew 26:33,35; secondly, When we discern no defect in our best duties, Nehemiah 13:22; thirdly, When we think we have earned any reward at God's hand by it, Luke 17:10.

2. Righteousness of works of supererogation, Micah 6:6–7, works above what the law required, in which also a man may perish.

3. Righteousness of works of good intention, as that of Uzzah, intending to save the ark by touching it against the law, 2 Samuel 6:6, with Numbers 4:15, in which he died, 2 Samuel 6:7. So Saul's sacrifice, out of a good intention, but against a commandment, lost his kingdom, 1 Samuel 13:12–14; see also, 1 Samuel 15:21,12,23.

4. Righteousness inherent, prized above the word; righteousness of a cause over-eagerly maintained, as in Job's case, justifying himself rather than God, which was overmuch righteousness. Yet this fourth may be rather handled as a consecratory in the verse, for no man perisheth in this righteousness, though he may fall foully.

Doctrine. Excess of righteousness, or to be righteous overmuch, is accompanied with an overweening conceit of a man's own wisdom, and followed with causeless destruction of a man's self, verse 16.

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Solomon joining this warning, Neither make thyself over-wise, to the former, Be not righteous overmuch, implieth, that an overweening conceit of our own wisdom doth accompany overmuch righteousness. And adding this reason, For why wilt thou destroy thyself? he implieth that these will procure destruction, and that without cause; and therefore he asketh, why?

Reason 1. Why it is accompanied with overmuch wisdom; because it maketh us wise without the word, and above the word, which ought not to be, 1 Corinthians 4:6. The word is the rule of wisdom, Isaiah 8:20.

Reason 2. Why it is followed with certain danger of destruction; because, first, It is ever joined with pride, which is a forerunner of destruction, Proverbs 16:18. Secondly, It reflecteth imperfection and insufficiency upon God's wisdom and word. For it is less dishonour to God that a man do a sin against the word, than a good duty above the word; the one argueth frailty and imperfection in us, the other in God. Thirdly, It submitteth not itself to the righteousness of Christ, but men in it go about to set up a saviour without Christ, and against him, Romans 9:31–32, with 11:7. Christ is indeed our wisdom, 1 Corinthians 1:24, and righteousness, 1 Corinthians 1:30; Jeremiah 23:6.

Use 1. To prevent and refute the misapplying of this text to the reproach and discouragement of growth and forwardness in grace and Christian duties. Even the heathen philosopher Aristotle could say, Though virtue consisteth in a mediocrity between two extremes, yet not in a mediocrity of degrees of goodness, but in a hyperbole or excess, *Politic.* lib. vii. cap. 1. Yea, it reproveth the despising of legal duties; for though they be not righteousness, yet they are gifts of the Spirit, restraining from sin, constraining to duty, and a greater gift from God than riches or honour. Brass is good, only it is counterfeit when it is put off for gold.

Use 2. To dissuade and direct from all this excess of righteousness here forbidden; not from the duties, but from taking them for our righteousness. When we have lived long in them, they are either our righteousness imputed or inherent.

Question. What would you have us to do more?

Answer 1. Know why Christ is good, as Matthew 19:17;

feel your, first, Want of him and of faith in him, John 16:7–8; 2. Worth of him, Canticles 4:10. Secondly, Listen duly to the word for some promise, doctrine, or example of grace, in which Christ is wont to convey his Spirit to lost souls to beget faith; 1. Either persuading us of grace from God to our souls in him, Psalm 119:43; 2. Or at least setting up him in our hearts as our sovereign good, Psalm 73:25,36. Thirdly, If you feel him not applying promises to you, nor himself in any word of grace with power, pray over the promises, and meditate on them; they will so give faith. Observe if this do not utterly pull down all our high thoughts of former worth in ourselves, Proverbs 30:2, and do not make us sensible of our own disability to any duty, 2 Corinthians 3:15. If the Lord thus carry us forth, it will take us off from overmuch righteousness, which will leave us destitute and desolate of Christ for our justification, and of the Spirit for our sanctification. Beware likewise of resting in works of good intention, without or beside the word.

Sincere righteousness may be overmuch prized, when we, first, Presume to walk in the strength of it, and not of faith, Matthew 26:33,35. Secondly, When we discern no defects in our best duties, Nehemiah 13:22. Thirdly, When we think we have earned any reward at God's hand by it, Luke 17:10.

Verse 17. Be not overmuch wicked neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?

Be not wicked overmuch, though the word is הרבה, as before אל תרשע, not, be not overmuch wicked, but do not wickedly overmuch), but yet, if we take it as it is translated, the sense is the same.

To be wicked overmuch implieth two things: 1. Aggravation of sin beyond the word; 2. Multiplication of it. First, To make a man's self more wicked than the word maketh him; so excessively wicked as thereupon to shut out a man's self from all hope of mercy, or otherwise worse than he is. This excess a man that is convinced of the emptiness of his

righteousness, which he prized overmuch before, is apt to sink into, even to despair. Cain, who before thought himself as righteous as his brother, and his sacrifice as acceptable as his, being convinced by God of his wickedness, sunk into despair of mercy, Genesis 4:15. Hence also some think they have

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sinned against the Holy Ghost; others, that they have quenched the Spirit, whenas rather the Spirit hath enlightened and awaked them. But this sense doth not fully answer the opposition in verse 14, though it answer well enough to verse 16.

Secondly, The phrase may well be translated, Do not evil much, that is, do not multiply transgression; as Amos 4:4, the word is used in this sense. Sin is multiplied either, 1. By continuance in it, Romans 6:1; 2. By growth unto full measure of iniquity, Matthew 23:32. A curse.

Doctrine. Excessive aggravation of sin, and all continuance and growth in sin, is accompanied with folly, and followed with untimely death. Sin is excessively aggravated when it is made, first, Greater than can be forgiven, as Genesis 4:13; see the original. So when we judge we have sinned against the Holy Ghost, when we have only lost the comforts of the Spirit. Secondly, Greater than will be forgiven, in regard either of our present hardness of heart, which we despair of softening, or in regard of our persons, which we judge to be reprobate. Thirdly, A sin of a higher kind than it is, as that to be a sin of presumption, when it is but a sin of infirmity, though against light. Fourthly, Our sin, and springing up in us, which is but cast into us by Satan; as thoughts of blasphemy darted into us, which our hearts tremble at and abhor. The weeds that are cast in over the pale into a man's garden, are not the weeds of the garden, till the soil give rooting to them, that is, consent. This is folly, as not judging of ourselves or our sins according to the word, which is the rule of wisdom, Isaiah 8:20; 2 Timothy 3:17, but according, 1. To our present sense, which in spiritual matters is blind and foolish, and very changeable; 2. To the suggestion of our enemy, This bringeth to untimely death, sometime by violent self-murder, Matthew 27:4-5.

Question. But how can a man die before his time?

Answer. Not before the time which God hath appointed, Job 14:5, yet before the time, first, Of the course of nature; secondly, Of our expectation of it; thirdly, Of our preparation for it. Continuance and growth in sin is, first, Foolish, Proverbs 14:16, and 13:9. As utterly against the word,

Romans 6:1; and as flattering us with empty hopes of impunity, Deuteronomy 29:19, and of repentance hereafter.

Secondly, Destructive and deadly before the time, Psalm 68:21, and 55:23: 1. Every sin which we commit setting us a step further off from salvation, Psalm 119:155; Romans 13:11 (*a pari*); 2. As kindling a greater fire of God's wrath, and adding more fuel to the fire, Deuteronomy 29:19–20; Amos 2:13; 3. As hardening the heart more and more unto impenitency, Hebrews 3:34; Romans 2:15; 4. As filling a vessel of dishonour the sooner full to the brim, Genesis 15:16.

Question. But how is this continuance and growth in sin said to be overmuch?

Answer. Because the former course of our wickedness may suffice us, 1 Peter 4:3.

Use 1. To dehort from aggravation of sin in any excessive measure above the word, though according to the word it be most wholesome, Psalm 40:12; Ezra 9:6.

Use 2. To dehort from continuance and growth in sin, Daniel 4:27; 1 Peter 4:3. Continuance implieth, first, Repetition of the act after we know it to be sin, Proverbs 19:19; not so Judah, Genesis 38:26. Secondly, Impenitency after it, only forbearance of the act; which may be feared in Judah, Genesis 38:26, till after Joseph had humbled, as an instrument in God's hand, him and his brethren. Thirdly, Toleration of the root of it, without mortification of it. Thus Jonah, repenting of his forsaking his call, but not mortifying the pride of his heart (which was the root of it), brake forth again, Jonah 4:9. Growth in sin, as when, first, More resolute, Jeremiah 44:16–17; secondly, More skilful at it, Jeremiah 4:22, wise to do evil; thirdly, More bold, Isaiah 3:9; fourthly, More outrageous, proceeding from evil to worse, to higher degrees of wickedness, 2 Timothy 3:13; Isaiah 1:5.

Verse 18. *It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.*

The two former admonitions in the verses next foregoing Solomon amplifieth, first, By a motive to the taking hold of them, taken from the goodness thereof. Secondly, By the means whereby we may perform what is required, and eschew the evils dehorted from; and that means is the fear of God. Thirdly, By an argument from the strength and

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supportance which this wisdom bringeth to a wise man, above great friends, verse 19.

Doctrine 1. It is a good thing to take hold of such admonitions as may keep us from excess either of righteousness or wickedness, or from overmuch either righteousness or wickedness. To take hold—which is done, first, By faith; both, 1. In the word, else it profiteth not, Hebrews 4:2; 2. In the Lord to help us by his strength, both of power, wisdom, and grace, Isaiah 27:5. Secondly, By hearty affection, as a precious treasure, Psalm 119:11. Thirdly, By caution and circumspection. Here to take heed is to take hold, Acts 16:14; Hebrews 2:1; wanting in Jehu, 2 Kings 10:31. Fourthly, By practice; so the word is taken, Proverbs 2:19. It is good not to be over-righteous: first, To prevent the evil of desolation threatened, verse 16. Desolation signifieth, 1. Solitude, left to a solitary condition; 2. Confusion, as Daniel 4:19, astonishment; 3. Destruction. Overmuch righteousness bringeth, (1.) Desertion from God, Luke 1:53, and 18:9, 14—we first deserting him, Romans 10:3; desertion from men, Job 32:1; (2.) Confusion through disappointment of a man's end and hopes, Romans 9:30–32; (3.) Destruction; for what shall satisfy for former sins and for defects of this righteousness? Secondly, To obtain the contrary solace, 1. Of peace with God, Romans 5:1; Isaiah 32:17; 2. Of establishment and encouragement in ill hours, Isaiah 28:16, with 1 Peter 2:6; 3. Of salvation, Proverbs 12:18. It is good not to be over-wicked, first, To prevent the evils of despair and of untimely death; as also to prevent the evils of continuance and growth in sin, mentioned in verse 17, page 72. Secondly, To obtain the good, 1. Of hope of possibility of help. It taketh hold of God's strength, Isaiah 27:5; Mark 1:40; and it stirreth up to the use of means, Ezra 10:2–4; 2. Of sincere reformation or breaking off the course of sin. First, Prolonging of tranquillity, Daniel 4:27. Secondly, Finding of mercy, Proverbs 28:13.

Use 1. To whet upon us both these admonitions—to beware both of overmuch righteousness and of overmuch wickedness in all the former particulars.

Use 2. To exhort us to grow up and walk on in the fear of God; which might have been handled as a distinct doctrine, being expressly mentioned in the text. The fear of God is a good preservation against

excess both of righteousness and wickedness—against excess of righteousness, Deuteronomy 5:27 with 29; against excess of wickedness, Proverbs 16:6, 14:16, and 28:14; Jeremiah 32:40.

Reason 1. It emptieth a man of self-confidence, Philippians 2:10,13.

Reason 2. It keepeth the heart soft, Proverbs 28:14.

Reason 3. To exhort us how to carry ourselves toward wholesome admonitions—to wit, as here Solomon warneth, to take hold of them in all the four particulars specified in opening the meaning of the text, Proverbs 4:13.

Verse 19 *Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.*

These words give another reason why we should beware of the folly of sin, and of the overmuch wisdom of excessive righteousness, taken from the safeguard or strong protection and deliverance which this wisdom will procure to a wise man, and that amplified *a minori* from the less supportance and deliverance which many great friends in court or city might afford him.

Doctrine. The wisdom of an innocent and truly righteous life, will yield a man greater supportance and safer deliverance than many great friends in court or city, Proverbs 24:5; Job 22:23,30. For the original text speaketh of this wisdom,—that is, this wisdom whereby a man avoideth both the folly of continuance in sin, verse 17, and the overmuch wisdom of excessive righteousness, verse 16, in both of which men undo or destroy themselves. To this wisdom will strengthen a man more, to wit, by supportance and by deliverance, than ten, that is, many, שליטים, princely lords and friends in the city, meaning the court which resided in the city, and whereto they resorted. Ten often put for many, Numbers 14:22; Job 19:3.

Reason 1. From the presence and protection of God with such whose ways are pure and upright before him, 2 Chronicles 16:9; Psalm 18:20–21, 23–24. God is, first, The light of our countenance, Psalm 42:11, and 43:5; secondly, The staff of our maintenance, Psalm 16:5; thirdly, The horn of our deliverance, Psalm 18:2.

Reason 2. From the protection and ministry of

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angels, who are greater than the greatest men, Psalm 34:7, and 91:11–12; 2 Kings 6:15–20.

Reason 3. From the favour which ways of true righteousness find even of strangers, 1 Peter 3:13; Job 5:19–23, even of enemies, Proverbs 16:7.

Reason 4. From the failing of all great friends, when God's hand is heavy upon them; as also in death, when righteousness faileth not, Proverbs 11:4; Psalm 146:3–4, and 88:18; Job 6:15–21, and 9:13.

Use 1. To remove the stumbling-block out of the way, which hindereth many from breaking off their sinful courses—to wit, from the loss of their great friends. Nay, the ways of true righteousness procure great friends, by God's overruling hand, Proverbs 22:11; 2 Kings 10:15–16. Jehu was but a hypocrite, yet would countenance a good man, and take countenance from him; even wicked princes by persuasion have befriended the church.

Use 2. To exhort such private Christians, and the whole state of the country, to walk and grow up in this wisdom: it may be our strength when all else may fail us in city and country, Psalm 27:10–11.

Verse 20. For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Solomon having commended this wisdom (as strengthening the wise above many great friends in court or city), whereby a man neither maketh himself over-righteous nor over-wicked, in this verse he giveth a reason of it, taken from the infirmity of the most righteous man upon earth. As who should say, Do not make yourself over-righteous, so righteous as no fault to be found in you (as Ephraim did, Hosea 12:8); for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Doctrine 1. Perfection of righteousness, so as to do good without sin, is not to be found in any man; no, not in the best man upon the earth, 1 Kings viii. 46; Psalm 130:3, and 143:2; Job 9:3, 30–31. Clothes defile, as testifying our sinful nakedness, which was the cause of it, Genesis 3:7. The meaning of the doctrine is, first, That in many things (and in some things more than others) all men, even the best man, do sin, James 3:2, either omitting good, or committing evil—Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, David, Peter. Secondly, That in all

things, in our best actions, we sin something, Nehemiah 13:22; Exodus 28:38; Psalm 80:4; Revelation 8:3–4.

Reason 1. From God's wise and just desertion of every one of his servants some time or other, for a season; either to know what is in our hearts, 2

Chronicles 32:31, or to chasten, first, Our carnal self-confidence, Matthew 26:33,35, and so to chasten our neglect of stirring up ourselves to lay hold of God, Isaiah 64:6-7; secondly, Our uncircumspect and unjust walking, neglect of pondering the paths of our feet, Psalm 119:9; Proverbs 4:26.

Reason 2. From the contrary lusting between the flesh and spirit, Galatians 5:17; hence floweth an impossibility of doing any one duty perfectly. Lust in him sinneth, not the person. If rebellious or irregular subjects of confederate princes trespass one upon another, it is not the trespass of the state, whilst the princes condemn it and punish it: how the judgment and will are Ἡγημονικῶς in a man; the carnal part are but as rebellious subjects.

Use 1. To refute, 1. Perfection of works held by papists and Catharists of old; and herewith, possibility of keeping the law. 2. Justification by works, Psalm 143:2; Romans 3:23-24. 3. Merit of works. 4. Supererogation. 5. The immaculate perfection of the Virgin Mary, טרא in the text, comprehendeth women as well as men, Genesis 1:26-27.

Use 2. To convince carnal wicked men of their abundance of sin, seeing the most godly and just fall, Job 15:16.

Use 3. To show us where our happiness lieth, to wit, not in our own innocency, but in the covering of our sins, Psalm 32:1-2; and therefore we seek for all our righteousness in Christ, Philippians 3:7-9; Romans 3:23-24.

Use 4. To mortify pride of our best duties.

Use 5. To teach us to bear evils at God's hand patiently, Micah 7:9.

Use 6. Not to be masterly censorious of the failings of our brethren, James 3:1-2; John 8:7.

Use 7. To comfort the godly righteous against the fear and grief of death in ourselves, or our Christian friends. In death the spirits of just men are made perfect, Hebrews 12:33; else death were not the last enemy, if sin remained after it, contrary to 1 Corinthians 15:96.

Verse 21. Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee:

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Verse 22. For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

Solomon having observed, verse 20, that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not, he hence infereth this corollary, not to set a man's heart upon all the words that are spoken, not upon all their hard sayings and in speeches, wherein all men, even the most wise and just, are sometimes to blame, either in speaking or in giving occasion to be spoken.

Parts, two: first, An exhortation not to set our hearts on all the words spoken; that is, 1. Not to listen after them, 1 Samuel 24:9, with 1 Samuel 20:8–10; 2. Not to be over-deeply affected with them, 1 Samuel 18:7–8; 3. Not to pursue the same with revenge, 2 Samuel 19:19–20. Secondly, Confirmation, by reasons two: 1. From the inconveniency which may easily attend it; so a man may hear his own servant cursing him or slighting him, verse 21. 2. From the conveniency of God's wise and just hand in measuring to us as we have measured to others, which that we have done, Solomon argueth from the testimony of his own conscience, verse 22.

Doctrine 1. It is not good to set a man's heart upon all men's speeches of him; no, not upon the hard and slight speeches of his own servants against him, to wit, first, In case men speak vanity, to wit, 1. Out of a vanity of mind, not upon any grounded cause or just occasion, Psalm 12:2, and 144:8; 2. Vanity of words, that are not likely to weaken a man in his calling, 1 Corinthians 4:3, else Paul stirred if his calling suffered, 2 Corinthians 10:10–11. Secondly, In case the words spoken by men, whose tongues are their own, whom a man can have no means to restrain, Psalm 38:12–14. Thirdly, In case of apparent evidence of our innocency to the contrary, Job 31:35–37. Fourthly, In time of public or private, special and weighty, avocation, another way; by humiliation, 2 Samuel 16:10–11, and by rejoicing, 2 Samuel 19:22. Otherwise it is meet in due time to take notice of any grounded and serious speech that may tend to the prejudice of our calling, and thereby to be stirred up, first, To search our hearts and ways, to see if we have not done the same, or the like evil; secondly, To clear ourselves if innocent, to repent and amend if guilty.

Reason 1. From the vanity often found in such

speeches, who take liberty to speak at random, without occasion, without consideration, without any real detriment to ourselves or callings, Psalm 73:9.

Reason 2. From the love and piety we are to bear to men; occasions of enmity and discord we should put out of our minds, Leviticus 19:18.

Reason 3. From the office of our memory and heart, which is the treasury of our souls, Matthew 12:35; and therefore not to be filled with trash, Jeremiah 4:14; Luke 2:51; on the contrary.

Reason 4. From the peace and tranquillity of our own spirits, which should not depend upon men's judgments or speeches, but upon God's, 1 Corinthians 4:3; 2 Corinthians 1:12.

Reason 5. From the privacy of our own conscience to our own slight speeches of others, Ecclesiastes 7:21–22.

Use 1. To teach us this part of the circumcision of the heart and ear, neither, first, To listen with the ear unto all vain speeches of a man's self; secondly, Nor to set the heart thereupon in such a manner as to trouble ourselves and others in vain.

Use 2. From the latter reason mentioned in the text, learn we, first, To walk circumspectly in the sight of our own hearts and consciences, else they will bear witness against us, 1 Kings 2:44; secondly, To be the more patient if others wrong us in the like kind, as our own hearts tell us we have wronged others, Judges 1:6–7; Matthew 7:1–2.

Verse 23. *All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.*

Verse 24. *That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?*

Verse 25. *I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:*

In these words Solomon maketh another observation of that which was meet for all men to observe by his example; even what befell himself in the search of wisdom in his own times; which was, first, That in all his search of wisdom, to wit, by the works of creation and providence, and by tracing out happiness in the courses which men are wont to take for it, he found that wisdom was too far off, and too deep for him, verses 23–24. Secondly, That

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missing of wisdom in the way, he applied his heart, or turned it about, to seek for wisdom in taking account of himself, and seeking to know the wickedness of his own folly, and the foolishness of his own madness,

verse 25. *And the reason of things* is better translated, *and the account of myself* or *my ways, &c.*, verse 25.

Doctrine 1. The sense of our vast and deep distances from attaining wisdom by the study of the creatures, and of the vanity of the ways of men, is a just motive to apply our hearts to make diligent search for wisdom in taking account of our own ways, and in the knowledge of the wickedness of our folly, and the foolishness of our own madness. To know, to seek, to search, verse 25, do all imply a diligent search. The doctrine consisteth of two branches: first, That by the knowledge of the creatures he shall find himself still at a great distance from wisdom, and wisdom more deep than to be digged out of the creatures; secondly, That hereupon Solomon was moved to seek it in looking homewards into his own heart and ways, and the folly and madness and wickedness thereof. The former branch is testified, 1 Corinthians 1:21; Romans 1:21–22; Job 28:12–14, 20–22.

Reasons of the former: 1. From the distance and depth of Christ from the creatures, and from the knowledge of them all. Christ is the wisdom both of God, 1 Corinthians 1:24, and of us, 1 Corinthians 1:30. But the wisest could never discern Christ by the creature, 1 Corinthians 2:6–9; hence not the creature, but the word is perfect to convert souls, Psalm 19:17.

Reason 2. From the aptness of the creature, and the knowledge of it, by reason of the curse that lieth upon it, to puff us up, Isaiah 47:10. Solomon confesseth himself, I said I will be wise this way, presuming of his knowledge, text.

Of the latter, that hereupon Solomon was moved to search after wisdom in taking account of himself and the folly of his own course;—

Reason 1. From the excellency of man himself. Above all the creatures, he is the lord of them all, and so their lord, Genesis 1:28–29; and therefore more may be found in observing a man's self, than all the other creatures.

Reason 2. From the vanity and vexation of spirit which all the creatures yield to a man. A man is

justly occasioned to look into the root and cause of it in himself.

Use 1. To convince all the wise philosophers of the heathens of the vast distance of wisdom from them; for they had no further means of wisdom than what Solomon, improving to the utmost, found far off from conveying true wisdom to him, Romans 1:22. A warning to scholars not to overvalue wisdom and knowledge which they have from the creatures.

Use 2. To teach us that in taking just account of ourselves and our ways we shall find our former course folly, even the wickedness of folly and madness, even the foolishness of madness, 2 Samuel 24:19; Acts 26:11; Job 40:4–5, and 42:6; Jeremiah 2:19; 2 Chronicles 16:9; Ezekiel 6:9, and 36:31.

Use 3. To teach us a difference of the wisdom of God revealed in the creatures. It is far off and deep, text; not so in the gospel, Deuteronomy 30:11–14, with Romans 10:6–7.

Use 4. To teach us there is much wisdom may be learned from knowing our own wickedness, foolishness, and madness. He was more than a common wise man that said, Proverbs 30:2, ‘Surely I am more foolish than any man’; 1 Corinthians 3:18; Jeremiah 10:14. For, first, The sense of our own folly and wickedness maketh us low and base, and so humbleth us before the Lord; secondly, The sense of our folly directeth us to seek true wisdom in Christ and in his word.

Verse 26. And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.

Solomon in the three former verses, having observed that in all the former search after wisdom he had not found it in the creature, he therefore applied his heart to seek out by wisdom the wickedness of his own folly, and the foolishness of his own madness. And in these verses, to the end of the chapter, he giveth the church an account both of what he had found upon taking account, and of his want of taking account: to wit, three things—first, An adulterous and idolatrous woman more bitter than death; whom he describeth, 1. By her effects: (1.) She

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is as snares slyly to catch; (2.) Her heart as traps; (3.) Her hands as bands. 2. By the subject persons about whom she is conversant; and they are either good in God’s sight, and they are delivered from her, or sinners, and they are taken by her, verse 26. Secondly, The rarity of faithful admonitions amongst men, especially amongst women, verse 28, which he amplifieth by his diligent and incessant search, verse 27. Thirdly, The vast distance of a man by his fall from his state of creation, or the vain and sinful fruits of man’s fall from the state wherein God created him, verse 29.

Doctrine 1. A man that setteth himself unfeignedly, or, to use Solomon's words, that applieth and turneth his heart wisely to search out his own wickedness, folly, and madness, shall find the instruments that led him into temptation and sin more bitter than death, as Solomon here found his wives and concubines, who drew him to maintenance of idolatry, 1 Kings 11:3-4.

Reason 1. From the shame and indignity put upon him by his wives and concubines, that were idolaters, pleading, it seemeth, liberty of conscience; whence he first granteth toleration, then countenance and assistance to their idols, erecting temples to them; whence altars, ornaments, priest, and all upon mount Olivet, before the face of the Lord in his temple, 1 Kings 11:7-8; 2 Kings 23:13.

Reason 2. From the bitterness of sin, and that even above death, Jeremiah 2:19; Acts 8:23; Deuteronomy 32:32-33. All the ingredients of bitterness are found in sin, which have made men bitterly to mourn: as, first, The loss of the blessing of a heavenly Father, Genesis 27:31, *a minori*; secondly, Cruel bondage, worse than Egyptian, Exodus 1:14; thirdly, Bitter water causing the curse, Numbers 5:24. Yea, sin is more bitter than death: as, first, Being the death of the soul, Romans 7:11, which is so much the more bitter than the death of the body, as the life of the soul is more sweet and precious than the life of the body; secondly, Depriving us of the presence and favour of God, which is better than life, Isaiah 59:2; Psalm 63:3.

Reason 3. From the bitterness of godly sorrow or repentance, Matthew 26:75; Zechariah 12:10. Matters of such bitterness in godly sorrows: first, For that we have pierced our dearest and best friends, Zechariah

12:10. Secondly, That by sin we have destroyed the beauty and strength, 1. Of family, as of our firstborn or only child; 2. Of church and commonwealth, as in the mourning for Josiah at Hadadrimmon, Zechariah 12:10-11. Hence, Lamentations 3:15, with 2 Chronicles 25:25, Solomon could not but see in his fall the division of the kingdom, 1 Kings 11:40. Hence corruption of religion in them, then in Judah also, to the utter destruction of all.

Use 1. To teach us concerning Solomon, first That Solomon did indeed repent after his fall secondly, That he wrote this book after his repentance.

Use 2. To wean all men from sin; it will be bitterness in the end, 2 Samuel 2:26; Acts 8:23; Proverbs 23:31-32, 5:34-35, and 20:17.

Use 3. To wean us from delighting in sinful companions; they will be bitter to us in the end as death, and more bitter too. Trust not in the friendship of such; for if ever they or we repent, we shall be ready to condemn and betray one another.

Use 4. To teach us a sign of true repentance, when sin groweth as bitter, yea, more bitter to us than death.

Use 5. To show us the danger of women once corrupted, how apt, and sly, and strong they be to draw on stronger than themselves to corruption, Nehemiah 13:26.

Use 6. To be upright in God's sight, and not to rest in a sinful state and course. The one is preserved from such women and snares; the other given up to be taken by her.

Verse 27. Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account:

Verse 28. Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.

Solomon here inferreth the manner and nature of the account which he took of his own wickedness and folly, which he describeth by three adjuncts or qualities: first, That it was exact and particular, one by one; secondly, that it was constant and continual—which still my soul seeketh; thirdly, That it was defective—which still my soul seeketh, but I find not.

Doctrine 1. The account which a penitent soul taketh

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of his wickedness and folly is a particular and constant account, and yet defective. Particular account, Lamentations 3:40; Zephaniah 2:1, where one part of the sense is fan yourselves; Psalm 51:5, original sin; verse 10, a foul heart, adulterous; verse 14, bloodguiltiness; murder, Ezekiel 6:9; Zephaniah 3:11. Constant and growing account, Psalm 119:59, with 139:23–24. Defective account, Psalm 19:12, and 38:4.

Reason of particular account: 1. From the illumination of conscience, especially when it is wakened to repentance, Proverbs 20:27. God dealeth with his servants when he humbleth them, as with carnal men; he entereth into judgment with them, Psalm 143:2, and 10:15. Conscience enlightened and awakened, sits as it were God's vicegerent in the soul, who, in his

judicial proceeding, is exact and particular, Matthew 12:36; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Psalm 90:8.

Reason of constant account: 1. From the sweetness of godly sorrow, 2 Corinthians 7:9–10; the deeper the sweeter; and sorrow is the deeper and greater, by how much deeper the search is. As in bodily wounds the deeper search into old sores, the greater pain to the body.

Reason of defective account: 1. From the deep deceitfulness of our hearts, Jeremiah 17:9; 2. From the innumerable multitude of our sins, Psalm 40:12, and 19:12; 3. From the imperfection of all our best knowledge of spiritual good and evil things, 1 Corinthians 13:9.

Use 1. To reprove our overly and slippery conceit of perfect accounts. Many are loath to enter into any account at all, like bankrupt merchants, or if they do, it is but overly, Jeremiah 8:15; they that do are loath to pursue it constantly—soon slip from it. The papists require a perfect examination of all particular mortal sins, as they call them, with all the circumstances of them.

Use 2. To teach us, after Solomon's example, what manner of account-books we should keep between the Lord and our souls; to wit,

First, Exact and particular. Motives: 1. It prevents God's examining and judging us, when we are strict in examining and judging ourselves, 1 Corinthians 11:28,31. 2. It will make our, first, Repentance more thorough and sincere; secondly, Prayers more fervent and humble; thirdly, Christ more precious and glorious; Fourthly, Mortification more powerful; fifthly, Heart

more watchful; sixthly, Life more regular, Psalm 119:39. 3. It will leave the conscience, first, More peaceable. Sin unaccounted of, will he like a debt unreckoned, and terrify, or at least trouble, the conscience, Psalm 25:7; Job 13:26. Secondly, More pure; sin unaccounted for is unpretended and like a Canaanite, will let in the devil at the back-door; as Jonah, that repented of disobedience to God's call, but not of the pride of his heart, the cause of it, hence he is passionate again for disgrace, chapter 4:1.

Or the second and third may be put together, as a motive from the benefit redounding, first, To ourselves, in our consciences, hearts, and lives; secondly, To our duties, in our repentance, prayers, and mortification; thirdly, To Christ.

Secondly, Constant motives: 1. Else our hearts will grow hard and barren, and full of lusts and passions, as the soil but once ploughed will grow fallow, and barren of good fruit, but abounding in weeds.

Thirdly, Sensible of its own defectiveness.

Motives.—1. It will call in for a higher search, even from God himself, without fear and terror, Psalm 139:23–24. 2. It will stir up to prayer for pardon of secret sins, Psalm 19:12.

Use 3. To teach us the right way of judging and admonishing others without arrogance or hypocrisy. Solomon here passeth a deep censure upon men and women, verse 28; but before this he taketh a strict account of himself. This method is needful to reckon first with ourselves, Matthew 7:5.

One man, &c.—*Doctrine* 1. There is a great scarcity of men, worthy the name of men, or acquitting themselves like men, and greater scarcity of women worthy of the name of women; and kings of all men, especially penitent kings, have most cause to say so. Or, There is a great scarcity of good men, and a greater scarcity of good women, especially about the court. For Solomon speaketh of what himself found: One man among a thousand have I found, which argueth a great scarcity of men; and surely he doth not mean that men for the most part are no men, but not good men, not such as are worthy the name of men, that acquit themselves like men, as they should, according to 1 Corinthians 16:13, in our several relations and employments, 2 Samuel 10:1–9;

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see the like phrase, Proverbs 18:22. So, 1 Chronicles 6:10, Jehoiada or Azariah (either of both, for the Holy Ghost giveth liberty to understand either), *sacerdotium egit*—executed the priest's office. Why, did not their predecessors and successors execute the same office? True, but not with like priestly wisdom, courage, zeal, faithfulness. There is such a like phrase in Job 33:23: 'one of a thousand, to declare to a man his righteousness', and so his failing and falling short of it; that is a faithful admonisher of the scarcity of faithful men, David, a courtier, complaineth, Psalm 12:1; Proverbs 31:10.

Reasons of few men: 1. From the paucity of the elect, Matthew 20:16. And if not elect, then not effectually called; and then, Christ not being united to us, we are still full of selfishness, self-conceit, self-will, self-seeking.

Reason 2. From the hardness and straitness of the gate and ways of righteousness, with the contrary liberty and ease of the gate and ways of sin and death, Matthew 7:13–14.

Reason 3. From the variety of the changes of relations wherein a man stands. A man that is a good servant, if he become a church member, he can despise his master, whether he be carnal, because such, or a brother, because then equal in Christ. Hence 1 Timothy 6:1–2.

Reason of fewer women: 1. From the greater liableness to deceit and temptation, 1 Timothy 2:14.

Reason 2. From their greater vehemency and impotency in their passions and lusts, not only on good objects, 2 Samuel 1:26, but on evil also, 1 Kings 21:25.

Reason 3. From their great superstition, Acts 13:50; 2 Timothy 3:6–7. This Solomon found by experience.

Reasons of fewest in court: 1. From the greatest paucity and rarity of great men called, 1 Corinthians 1:26.

Reason 2. From the affected liberty of great men especially, Jeremiah 5:5.

Reason 3. From the self-seeking of flattery, frequent in courtiers, Hosea 7:3,5; 2 Chronicles 14:17; 1 Kings 22:13.

Reason 4. From the temptations that follow the court: immunity from controlment, Amos 7:13; Isaiah 30:10; impunity from the hand of justice. The court is commonly made a sanctuary for iniquity.

Use 1. To refute the papists' note of the church, multitudes; not one of a thousand. More Mohammedans than Christians of all sorts.

Use 2. To dissuade men from blessing themselves in leading such a life as most men lead, Exodus 23:2. Scarcity of good store of company in good ways is no just discouragement from walking in them; yet with this caution, not therefore to neglect the multitude of the godly, whether in matters of judgment or practice, 1 Corinthians 14:36, and 11:16.

Use 3. To humble both men and women for this scarcity of goodness amongst us. See how low sin debaseth! We are not worthy of the name of men and women by reason thereof, Proverbs 30:2; Psalm 49:20, and 73:22; 1 Corinthians 15:32; Ecclesiastes 3:18. Grace maketh us like to angels, yea, to God himself—amongst men, one of a thousand; but sin maketh us rather beasts than men. Not one man scarce of a thousand, or woman, that quit themselves well in all their relations.

Use 4. To wean us from affecting to live in the court; where, of all places, goodness is most rare. God threatened preferment in a great court for a great plague, 2 Kings 20:18.

Use 5. To teach good men and good women especially to be the more thankful that God should show us such special grace and favour, as to pass by thousands, and call us to goodness. Universal righteousness endoweth us with rare excellency, such as is scarce found in a thousand.

Verse 29. *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*

In this verse we have set down the third experiment or event which Solomon found upon taking account of his own wickedness and folly; to wit, the righteousness of God in his work about man, but man's perverse subtlety in inventing ways of backsliding, or apostasy from God.

Question. 1. How doth he say he found this only, seeing he found two other things before? First, The bitterness of wicked women, verse 26; secondly, The scarcity of good men, and greater scarcity of good women, verse 18.

Answer. By only is meant chiefly, as Joshua 1:7–8; Galatians

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2:10; Proverbs 4:3; with 1 Chronicles 3:5; Canticles 6:9.

Question 2. How is God said to make man righteous?

Answer. Righteous, first, In his first creation, Genesis 1:26–27; secondly, His own children, such as himself and his father before him, in their regeneration, Jeremiah 2:1.

Question. What is meant by inventions, and man's seeking them out?

Answer. Inventions are translated engines, 2 Chronicles 26:25, as slings to offend the enemy, and bulwarks to defend ourselves. Seeking out these, argueth a perverse diligence to deal subtly in inventing ways of corrupting ourselves.

Doctrine 1. A penitent soul, taking good account of his wickedness and folly, shall evidently and eminently find the righteousness of God in all his work upon us, and the perverseness and subtlety of our inventions to corrupt ourselves, even from our first parents to this day. Evidently: for lo, or behold, saith he. Eminently: for, saith he, This only, or chiefly, or eminently, have I found. Inventions: he meaneth no profitable inventions for the good of themselves or others, as arts, or manufactures, or occupations; but such inventions whereby we seek to start away from God, and to corrupt ourselves. As some horses put into a good pasture, yet will seek round about the fence to find a gap to range out. Thus Moses taught

backsliding Israel, Deuteronomy 31:19, to see God's righteousness, Deuteronomy 32:4; their own perverseness, Deuteronomy 32:5,15; Nehemiah 9:33; Job 33:27-28: God made Adam righteous at first, Genesis 1:26-27; to wit, first, In knowledge, Colossians 3:10, giving him a right understanding of things; secondly, In holiness and righteousness, setting his heart and affections upon their proper objects, Ephesians 4:24. Right: first, As suitable to the righteous law of God, which is a straight and right rule, Psalm 16:8. As setting the inferior parts of the soul and whole man in a right order to the superior; will to the judgment or conscience; affections to the will, Proverbs 16:32; outward members to both, Romans 6:13; all to God, Romans 6:13; all which are now disordered and perverted, Psalm 125:4-5. Thirdly, As being in a state well pleasing to God; right in God's sight, 2 Chronicles 29:2.

Reason of God so making us at first. The justice and holiness of God required it of himself, that if he create man to a spiritual and supernatural end—to wit, fellowship with himself—and require of him obedience to a spiritual and holy law to lead him to that end, that then he should lift him up above his reason to a holy estate by original righteousness; otherwise from his first creation he had been made sinful and crooked.

Reason of reforming man to a state of righteousness: the praise of the glory of his grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:4-5.

Reasons of man seeking inventions: 1. From the liberty of will God left man unto, 2 Chronicles 32:21

Reason 2. From the forwardness not to rest satisfied in the condition God had provided for him; but he would be active to improve his condition by his own wit and strength. Adam and all his posterity made righteous, sought out many inventions to fall off from God. Eve, and by her persuasion Adam, invented a way to get wisdom in the knowledge of good and evil, Genesis 2:6. Solomon's wives invented many wiles to draw him to tolerate them in the liberty of their religion. Solomon himself invented many devices how to satisfy himself in satisfying them. Conscience is tender; faith is the gift of God. His father David compelled no pagans to circumcision. His subjects invented many shifts to put off from themselves the faithfulness of a wholesome advertisement to Solomon. The common people put it off to the nobles, the nobles to the priests, the priests to the prophets; the prophets excused themselves by the king's transcendent wisdom above them, Ecclesiastes 8:1. So David before him sought many inventions to cloak his sin with Bathsheba.

Reason of finding this as chiefly grievous to a penitent soul, from the proper nature of repentance, which is deepliest affected with sin as it is, first, Most dishonourable to God; secondly, Most injurious to the grace of Christ, contrary to means and mercies, and pernicious to the church of Christ; thirdly, Committed with the greatest perverseness and foolish subtlety of our own hearts.

Use 1. To refute the popish doctrine that original righteousness in Adam by creation was M holly

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supernatural, and given by free grace. But then Adam had been right without it, in which he was not, but right by it. It was indeed, first, Supernatural, as not flowing from the principles of nature: a man is a perfect man without it for substance; secondly, As not deserving by men who had done neither good nor evil.

Secondly, Natural, as due, first, To the purity of God's nature to make us so perfect; secondly, To the integrity of man's nature, without which he was not so perfect in qualities as were meet for God's pure nature to make. The papists herein extol the freeness of grace to Adam, not to magnify the grace of God, but to derogate from the grace of Christ. For if nature were entire and perfect without God's image, then the want of it in corrupt nature is no sin, but natural to man; and so original sin depraving nature, and requiring necessity of a new birth in Christ, is no sin, but suitable to right nature; and so original sin is no sin, not only after baptism, but even before baptism. But concupiscence is not of God's work in nature, 1 John 2:16.

Objection. Concupiscence and rebellion of the lower parts of the soul against the higher is natural; for the man being made of a body and a soul, must needs be carried both to spiritual and sensual objects. And so this rebellion and stirring of the one part against the other will be found to arise from the principles of pure nature.

Answer. The body may affect sensual objects, and the soul spiritual, and both without sin, in subordination of sensual things to spiritual, and of both to God.

Use 2. To teach us a true sign of repentance, never to blame God for our falls, but our own perverse subtlety. God made us right, and the regenerate twice right; and his work hath been upright to usward, in leaving us to our falls; we provoked him to it by our self-fullness. But it is we that have perverted our ways, and took pains—sought out devices

and cunning inventions—to do wickedly. Yea, this finding out, our own perverse subtlety in seeking out inventions to depart from God, and deceive ourselves, should more deeply affect and afflict us, than all other evils besides; this bringing forth most dishonour to God, injury and abuse to the gifts and graces of Christ, and corruption of nature to ripeness and perfection.

Use 3. To teach us to loathe all evil inventions, Romans 1:30. It is a fruit of a reprobate mind, verse 28, with 30; such are inventors of fashions, oaths, lusts, and torments.

Use 4. To exhort us not to think ourselves right till we attain that estate wherein God made us at first; and that with greater contentment in it than he took, lest we seek, as he did, many inventions.

CHAPTER VIII.

Verse 1. *Who is as the wise man ? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man' wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.*

Verse 2. *I counsel thee to keep the king' commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.*

Verse 3. *Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.*

Verse 4. *Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?*

Verse 5. *Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man' heart discerneth both time and judgment.*

The former chapter Solomon ended with a complaint of the inventions which men (though made righteous) are wont to seek out, both to lead themselves into sin and to excuse themselves from holy duty, either of pure worship to God, or faithful love to a brother fallen into sin; who, being fallen, might after be healed by wise and faithful admonition, but that all sorts of men are wont to seek out many inventions to excuse themselves from that unwelcome office, as they count it. It was said above, that mean men put it off to nobles, nobles to the priests, the priests to the prophets, the prophets, and indeed generally all the sorts of Solomon's

loyal subjects, put it off by the inventions which here, in these words, Solomon both propoundeth and refuteth.

Invention 1. From Solomon's eminency of wisdom, together with the unsearchable depth of his counsels and proceedings, which were so deep as they were not able to search out the bottom, the meaning or interpretation of them: Who is as the man (that is, as Solomon), the wise man? 1 Kings 4:31; and

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who knoweth the interpretation (the reason or meaning) of his matters? Our ignorance and weakness, might his subjects say, will dash us out of countenance when we speak to him.

Refutation 1. From the power of wisdom even in a mean man (as Adam is here meant, as also in Psalm 49:2), wisdom maketh his face to shine; secondly, From the change of the strength or boldness of his face, which may be referred either to the former antecedent, and then it is meant the wise man's face, that is, Solomon's face; the boldness or strength of it, as the word signifieth, shall be changed upon a wise and just admonition or presentment of his sin before him, as Daniel 5:6. Or else it may be referred to the strength and boldness of a mean man's face, which shall be doubled, as the word also signifieth, in speaking upon just ground, in humble and discreet manner, even to the king himself, as 2 Samuel 12:7.

Invention 2. Taken from the loyalty and submission of subjects to such great princes. I am to observe, for so it is in the original, the mouth of the king, and that in regard of the oath of God, verse 2—to wit, the oath of allegiance. As who should say, It is not for me to inquire and dispute of matters of state, princes' commands, but to observe and do what I am commanded. If Solomon command masons and carpenters to build temples to his wives' idols, and the nobles to oversee the work, and all his subjects to contribute to it, it is not for me to gainsay, but to obey. My oath of allegiance binds me far.

Refutation. Be not hasty to go out of his sight, that is, out of the king's sight, to execute every commandment which he putteth upon thee. Joab went slowly out from the presence of king David in such a case, 2 Samuel 24:3–4. Stand not in an evil thing, as they do that perform the works of sinners, Psalm 1:1; for the king doth many times, not according to what is right and well-pleasing in the sight of God, but whatsoever pleaseth himself, verse 3.

Invention 3. From the power and uncontrollable authority of the king's commands, and the danger of such as shall resist or speak against them, especially to his face. Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou? verse 4.

Refutation, First, From the safety of attending God's commandment rather than man's: 'Whoso keepeth the commandment, shall feel no evil thing', verse 5. Secondly, From the discretion of a wise man's heart to observe both time and judgment, that is, a judicious and right manner in dealing with the king or any other great one, verse 5.

That these words are thus to be taken by way of objection and answer, or invention and refutation, appeareth, first, Partly by the coherence with the former chapter; secondly, Partly from the unseasonableness of the preacher otherwise, if he should here extol his own transcendent wisdom and sovereign power, when he is declaring and confessing his deepest penitential sorrows, from verse 26 to the end of the foregoing chapter.

Doctrine. It is not the eminency of the king's person and wisdom, nor the depths of the king's counsels and proceedings, nor the loyalty and sworn allegiance of the subjects, nor the sovereign authority and power of the commands of princes, nor any such like other invention, that can excuse subjects from admonishing princes, according to our callings, of their grievous falls into notorious scandals; for Solomon here removeth and refuteth all these excuses as vain inventions, 2 Samuel 12:112; 1 Chronicles 21:3-4, and 6:10; 1 Kings 18:17-18, 20:42, and 21:20-24; 2 Kings 1:16; 2 Chronicles 16:7-9, and 19:2; 2 Kings 5:13.

Objection. Job 34:18.

Answer. There is no colour for an objection if the words were not much corrupted in the translation. The original readeth it thus: That saith to a king, Thou art wicked; and to princes, Ye are ungodly; where Elihu useth it as an argument to justify God's righteousness, because he accepted no man's person—no, nor prince.

Reasons. First, From the vanity of all such pretences as might seem to excuse us from this duty, as, 1. The transcendent wisdom and depth of some princes above their poor subjects. Answer First, The wisest are not always wise, Job 32:9—great men, to wit, great in wisdom and power. Solomon sometimes saw his own madness, Ecclesiastes 7:25.

Secondly, Wisdom in a mean person will make his face shine—that is, make it, 1. Amiable, Numbers 6:25-26; 2. Honourable and glorious, Acts 6:15; 3. Reverend and awful, as Exodus 34:30. Thirdly,

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From the falling of a bold and stern spirit before a wise reproof; for so I rather take it, because the word is ever taken in ill part, as, 1. For sternness, Deuteronomy 28:50; Isaiah 33:19; Daniel 8:23; 2. Impudency and rude boldness, Proverbs 7:13; 3. Hardness and obstinacy, Proverbs 21:29. Thus fell the countenance of David before Nathan; of Saul before Jonathan, 1 Samuel 19:4–6; of Ahab before Elijah, 1 Kings 21:27; of Felix before Paul, Acts 24:25. Or if the strength of the king's countenance change not, thine shall be doubled, 1 Kings 22:18–19; Daniel 3:13, 16.

2. The loyalty of an obedient subject, and that ratified by oath, verse 2. *Answer*. First, Yet there may be too much haste in obeying, Esther 3:15; Daniel 2:13, 15; as when kings command, 1. For trial, 1 Kings 3:24–25; 2. With change of mind, Daniel 6:14; 3. Unlawful things; which to obey will breed smart, first, From God's hand; secondly, From man's, Hosea 5:11; Daniel 6:24. Secondly, Obedience is only due in the Lord, Ephesians 6:1, not against him, Acts 4:19. Thirdly, An oath and God's name in it bindeth not to sin against God, but rather the contrary.

3. The sovereign power and uncontrollable authority of princes, verse 4. *Answer* First, God's commandment and the keeping of it is a preservative from evil, verse 5; he is higher than princes, Ecclesiastes 5:8; Proverbs 21:1. Secondly, A wise man's heart will observe a right time and manner, verse 5; so did Abigail, 1 Samuel 25:36–37; and Nathan, 2 Samuel 12:1–14.

Reason 2. From the duty we owe, first, To God, the King of kings; secondly, To the king by covenant; thirdly, To the peace of the church and commonwealth.

Use 1. To exhort subjects to be faithful in admonishing magistrates when God leaveth them to scandalous falls, and giveth us a call to it; which they do, 1. When they call us to execute their sinful commands, as 1 Chronicles 21:3–4; 2. When by our place we are to watch over them, Ezekiel 3:17–21; 3. When they are not the sons of Belial, nor dogs, nor swine, but will hear us attending upon them, 1 Samuel 25:17; Matthew 7:6; 2 Kings 5:13. Fear not the stiffness of their faces, Ezekiel 2:6, nor their wisdom, power, will.

Use 2. To teach us the best ornament of the face. It is not jewels, nor laces, nor painting, but wisdom, that makes the face to shine, verse 1.

Use 3. To teach great men to let their countenance fall at any just admonition: 'The strength of his face shall be changed', verse 1.

Use 4. To teach a lawful use of an oath of fidelity and subjection to magistrates, verse 2.

Use 5. To forbear haste in executing magistrates' commands, unless it be in lawful and expedient matters, verse 3. Serve not kings' pleasures in evil. Doeg herein did wickedly, 1 Samuel 22:18; the Egyptian midwives better, Exodus 1:16–17; and the guard of Saul, 1 Samuel 22:16–17, and 14:44–45.

Use 6. The sovereignty of princes leaveth them scarce any faithful friends or admonitors: scarce one of a thousand, verse 5. See the misery of sovereignty.

Use 7. To encourage to walk in the path of God's commandments. From the indemnity and safety of such a course, verse 5, Moses felt no harm from Pharaoh, nor Samuel from Saul, nor Nathan from David, nor Elijah from Ahab, nor Jehu from Jehoshaphat, nor Amos from Amaziah.

Objection. But Hanani did from Asa, 2 Chronicles 16:10; Zechariah from Joash, 2 Chronicles 24:20–21; Uriah from Jehoiakim, Jeremiah 26:23; John from Herod, Mark 6:27; Stephen from the high priests, Acts 7:51–59.

Answer. First, God doth often prevent such evil entertainment of the faithfulness of his servants; secondly, If they suffer imprisonment, banishment, death for God's commandment, it is no evil, but a crown of martyrdom.

Versè 5. A wise mans heart discerneth both time and judgment.

These words are a second answer to the third invention which Solomon's subjects made to excuse themselves for dealing faithfully with him in some good of admonition, when he was falling into this great sin of harkening to his wives in the toleration, yea, and maintenance, of their idolatrous religion.

The invention or excuse was taken from the sovereignty and uncontrollable power and authority of princes, and the danger of opposing them, though but in word, in their way, verse 4. Whereto Solomon answereth, and opposeth, first, The safety of obedience

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to the commandment of God: 'Whoso keepeth the commandment, shall feel no evil thing.' Secondly, The discretion of a wise man's heart in so observing the fit time and season, and the manner and way of an admonition, as might prevent all danger in dispensing of it even to a king or any other superior; and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and

judgment, verse 5. Thirdly, The insufficiency of retaining our own life by retaining the king's favour, Ecclesiastes 8:8.

Time, that is, a fit season of an admonition.

Judgment, that is, the manner, order, or way of it, as the word is translated, 1 Samuel 8:11.

Doctrine. A wise man's heart doth so well discern the time and manner of an admonition, as that he may dispense it safely, though it were to a superior, even to a king, 1 Samuel 25:3,36-37, and 19:4-6; 2 Samuel 12:1-12; Daniel 4:27.

Question. When is the fit time or season of an admonition, especially of superiors?

Answer 1. When we are called on to be the instruments in sin, as Joab to David, 1 Chronicles 21:2-3; secondly, When they come to us for counsel, in the same or other matters, 1 Kings 14:1-16; thirdly, When others are in danger to be corrupted, unless present witness be born against the sin, Galatians 2:13-14; fourthly, When neither admonisher nor admonished are distempered with passion, nor prejudice, nor any choking impediment; but rather God offereth an opportunity by some word of favour or encouragement, 1 Samuel 25:36-37; Esther 7:2-4. We must hazard our favours for the service of God and his people.

Question 2. What is the fit manner, or order, or way of dispensing an admonition?

Answer. According to certain rules, whereof some concern, first, The person admonishing; secondly, The person admonished; thirdly, The offence for which admonition is given; fourthly, The admonition itself.

1. *Rules* concerning the admonisher: 1. The admonisher should have a calling to it, through some relation between himself and the offender. As we find it in all kinds of relations, first, A minister, 2 Samuel 12:1-12; secondly, A counsellor, 2 Samuel 19:5-7; thirdly, A yoke-fellow, husband, Job 2:10; wife, 1 Samuel 25:36-37; fourthly, A son,

1 Samuel 19:4; fifthly, A servant, 2 Kings 5:13; sixthly, A subject, Daniel 4:27; seventhly, A brother, Revelation 1:9; Colossians 4:17; eighthly, A friend, Proverbs 27:5-6. Yea, a stranger travelling by the way and seeing his fellow-traveller sin, he hath as good a calling to help him up, as if himself or his beast were fallen; the relation of a companion requireth it. 2. He should be furnished with love to the offender, Leviticus 19:17; 1 Corinthians 16:14. 3. He should first admonish, judge, and cleanse himself, Matthew 7:5; Romans 2:1.

2. *Rules concerning the admonished:* first, They should not be scorers, Proverbs 9:7–9; Hosea 4:4; Matthew 7:6, but such as may be capable of reformation. Secondly, Brethren, especially to be admonished, yea, though excommunicate, whilst there is hope, 2 Thessalonians 3:15; else, if wedded to his sin, let him alone, Hosea 4:17. And of brethren, difference to be made, first, Of spirits: some are more sluggish, they to be admonished more sharply, Titus 1:12; Jude 23; some more tender, they to be admonished with more meekness, Galatians 6:1; Jude 22. Secondly, Of years and place: 1. Men of greater years and place rather exhorted than reprov'd, 1 Timothy 5:1; Daniel 4:27; 2. Inferiors with more liberty and plainness. Thirdly, Any man capable of hearing or bearing a word of admonition.

3. *Rules concerning the sins admonished:* first, They must be certainly known and convinced, 1 Corinthians 5:1; Matthew 18:15; we may not reprove upon a suspicion, 1 Corinthians 13:5, nor upon our own inquisition; it is as if I should say, Let me put my finger in your eyes to feel if there be not a mote; nor upon any uncertain hearsay, Isaiah 11:3. Secondly, A difference must be put between motes and beams, gnats and camels, Matthew 23:24. Camels and beams may not be admonished with gentle reproofs, 1 Samuel 2:23–24.

4. *Rules concerning the admonition of itself:* first, It should be dispensed in most wholesome words, such as may be most fit to gain a sinner and heal his soul. Wholesome gaining words are, first, General terms, especially at first, and against precious and gainful sins, and dangerous to be openly rebuked, Acts 19:36–37. Secondly, Clothed in parable, 2 Samuel 12:1–3, &c. A garment is best seen how it becometh us on another man's back. Thirdly, Delivered

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in Scripture phrase, that the offender may see God reprov'ing him in his own words, rather than man, Matthew 15:7–9. Fourthly, Such as acknowledge some good where it is, as well as see faults, Revelation 2:2–4; pills would be given in sugar. Secondly, In order. Less sins would be first reprov'd; John first reprov'd Herod for less matters, Mark 6:20, before he came to the matter of Herodias. *Vada prius pertentanda*, Jeremiah 12:5.

Reason of the doctrine: from a wise man's self-denial; hence God guideth and blesseth him, Proverbs 3:5–7.

Use 1. To instruct us in this great and difficult, yet most necessary, duty of love, admonition; to neglect it wholly is a hatred of our brother in

our heart, Leviticus 19:17. All the excuses of it are sinful inventions. To tell others of it, not themselves, is a slander and malice, Proverbs 26:28; to admonish offenders themselves, not in fit time and manner, is to spill the admonition, to take an ordinance in vain.

Use 2. To teach the admonished to take such a duty in good part, as a precious balm, Psalm 141:5, as a jewel or golden earring, Proverbs 25:12.

Verse 6. Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him.

Verse 7. For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?

Solomon had in the former verse given it as one means of safety to a subject, in admonishing his prince going astray, to wit, a wise man's heart discerning both time and judgment, the fit season and fit manner of such a duty. In these words he amplifieth this fit time and judgment by the universality of the subject, to which time and judgment is fitted; and that is, to every purpose or business, and he meaneth every lawful and good purpose or business; for there is no time nor manner fit to commit sin. Whence he inferreth as a corollary, that the misery of man is great upon him; and withal he giveth the reason why such great misery falleth upon men in respect of the time and judgment fitted to every action, taken from man's ignorance of that time and judgment, which he expresseth both by a man's own ignorance thereof, and by other men's unfitnes to

tell him, verse 7: Who shall tell him for the time when it shall be, or for the manner how it shall be? The word signifieth both. The words afford three observations, which we may handle in order, and make use of them together.

Doctrine 1. To every lawful purpose and business there is a fit time and manner for the doing of it. For persons, Acts 13:36,25; for thoughts, 1 Kings 5:5, with 2 Samuel 7:3; for words, Proverbs 25:11; for actions, Psalm 32:6; Isaiah 55:6; John 2:4,7-8.

Reason 1. From the sovereignty of God to appoint times and seasons, Acts 17:7.

Reason 2. From the beauty of everything in its time, Ecclesiastes 3:11.

Reason 3. From the necessity of the concurrence of all due circumstances to make an action good, 2 Samuel 17:7; 2 Kings 5:26.

Doctrine 2. Men ordinarily are ignorant of the time and manner of doing any business, especially spiritually good, verse 7. As the Hebrew renders it—to wit, what that time should be, and how or after what manner it should be, Ecclesiastes 9:12; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Jeremiah 10:23. The text speaketh chiefly of ordinary men, not of the godly wise; for the wise know time and judgment, verse 5, but ordinary men, they neither know time and judgment themselves, nor do others tell them. Ordinary men consult with men like themselves, who mislead them, 1 Kings 12:8.

Reason 1. From the want of the inward light of the image of God, they are darkness, John 1:5; Ephesians 5:8.

Reason 2. They are self-confident and full, walking without counsel, Proverbs 14:16, and 28:26.

Reason 3. If they consult, it is not with God, Isaiah 30:1–2; Psalm 10:4; nor with his word, and then no light, Isaiah 8:20; but with foolish and wicked men like themselves, 1 Kings 12:8.

Doctrine 3. For want of discerning and observing fit time and manner, the misery of man is great upon him, verse 6; Genesis 27:12–24, with 31:40–41; 1 Samuel 8:5–18, and 13:8–13; 2 Kings 5:26–27; 1 Kings 12:7,19; 2 Chronicles 35:22–24.

Reason 1. From God's delight and good pleasure to vouchsafe his presence, his concurrence, and his blessing, when actions are done in God's time, and

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after his manner, Psalm 32:6; Isaiah 55:6; and his refusal thereof, when otherwise, Numbers 14:42; 1 Samuel 13:13; Hebrews 12:17.

Reason 2. From the snare and net that lieth upon men in every action done out of due time and manner, Ecclesiastes 9:12; 2 Chronicles 35:22–24, with Lamentations 4:20. Crosses may befall a man in the best actions; but snares, inextricable difficulties, befall men only in evil ways, and good things done out of due time and manner.

Use 1. To teach us to discern and observe not only our words and all our ways, but even the fit time and manner of them, as we do desire to be freed of the great misery that else may befall us. Jacob sought the blessing out of due time and manner; it cost him twenty years hard service; and his mother, that counselled him amiss, never lived to see him again. The Israelites sought a king out of due time and manner, and brought upon themselves the misery of twenty years' tyranny. It is dangerous missing the time of our conversion, Luke 19:42–44; missing the time of

helping on our families to God-ward, Hosea 14:7; they utterly miscarry, 1 Samuel 20:30. So for the church and temple work, Haggai 1:2; so for the commonwealth, 1 Kings 9:4-7, 11:23-25, and 12:7,19.

Means of discerning fit time and manner: first, Inward light of the Spirit, and image of God, Isaiah 30:21; Proverbs 4:18-19; fear of God and love to man give much light, Proverbs 25:12; 1 John 2:10-11. Secondly, Avoid self-confidence, Proverbs 3:5-7, and 28:26. Thirdly, Consult with God; in fasting and prayer, Esther 4:6, with 5:2; in his word, Psalm 119:24, 105; in the times and opportunities of providence, Psalm 32:8; in the counsels of godly wise, 1 Kings 12:7. Fourthly, Fit manner in all actions is, faith, Romans 14:23, and love, 1 Corinthians 16:13; for the end, God's glory, 1 Corinthians 10:31, and the good of others, 1 Corinthians 10:24.

Verse 8. There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

Amongst the inventions which Solomon's subjects found out to excuse themselves from dealing faithfully with him, when he fell to the toleration and

maintenance of idolatry, in building temples to his wives' idols, and endowing them with liberal maintenance, and in employing the hands and service of his subjects in such structures, this was the third, That where the word of a king is, there is power (or dominion, or authority, verse 4), and that power is irresistible and uncontrollable: 'Who may say unto him, What doest thou?'

This invention or excuse Solomon taketh away, first, By the safety of obedience to God's commandment: 'Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil', verse 5. Secondly, By the discretion which a wise man hath, verse 5, to observe fit time and judgment; for missing whereof great misery falleth upon men, verse 6-7. Thirdly, By the restraint of magistrates' power from reaching to a double object: 1. To restrain or constrain the spirit or conscience; 2. To discharge from death, which latter power—to discharge or deliver from death—he denieth also to all wickedness (which men will not stick to commit, to prevent the king's wrath, which else might be as the messenger of death, Proverbs 16:14), verse 8. Fourthly, By the wise man's observation of one man's rule sometime over another for hurt, verse 9.

Power. Here is a word of the same notation with that verse 4, implying authority and dominion, whence *Sultan*. There is not a man that hath dominion over the spirit.

Spirit. It is not here meant the soul, to retain it in the body; for, 1. That is expressed in the next part of the verse. Neither is there power or dominion—to wit, in a king—in the day of death to discharge a subject in that war. 2. The verb translated *to retain*, is rather to compel, to restrain, or constrain, and properly signifieth *coercere*; as David called his son by Abigail by a name from this root, Chileab, 2 Samuel 3:3, because of his mother's restraint of him from shedding blood: whence also *בית כלא* a prison, 2 Kings 17:4. To retain the soul in the body is wont to be expressed in another phrase in that language, Psalm 22:29; but by spirit is here meant the conscience, as elsewhere often, Proverbs 20:27, and 18:14; Acts 20:22.

Doctrine. There is not a man, no, not the king, that hath a coercive power over the conscience.

He cannot, 1. Constrain to sin forbidden of God, Daniel 3:13–18, nor restrain from duty commanded

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of God, Daniel 6:7 to 22. 2. Bind conscience in things indifferent—that is, lay such a weight or burden upon a commandment of his own that it shall be a sin to the conscience to neglect it. If man's commandment could bind the conscience, then the commandments of men would be the doctrines of religion, against Matthew 15:9. 3. By outward punishments compel a man to do against his conscience—to wit, he cannot, that is, he ought not, till conscience be convinced, and then it is self-condemned.

Reason 1. From the immediate subjection of conscience to God; for, first, There God only writeth his law, Romans 2:15; secondly, God only can discern, judge, and punish sins against conscience: discern, Jeremiah 17:10; judge and punish, Job 6:4; Luke 12:4–5; James 4:12. Hence subjection of the conscience to man is flat idolatry.

Reason 2. From the immediate spiritual dominion of the conscience over the man, Romans 14:5, 14, 23; Acts 20:22.

Use 1. To resolve a great question of conscience, Whether a king or magistrate may compel men to profess and practise the religion established by law of his country?

Answer. First, For false religion. It is out of question; no, he sinneth in doing it, and the people in obeying it, 1 Kings 15:30.

Secondly, For the true religion, as to worship the true God, the maker of heaven and earth, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we answer in six propositions.

Proposition 1. David and other godly kings of Israel did not force conquered pagan nations to worship the God of Israel, whether they lived in their own country or dwelt in the land of Israel. As in case a heathen proselyte came to join to the church of Israel, it was requisite he should circumcise his males, Exodus 12:48, but not required that his wife should be of like religion with him, Numbers 12:1; the law in Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 13 concerning an Israelite marrying a pagan, and so Malachi 2:11, not a heathen marrying a pagan before his conversion. It is not, therefore, a solid answer which some do give, that the kings of Israel are no precedents for Christian kings, partly because they were types of Christ, and because their land was typical and sacramental; for what they did as kings, heathen kings did the same lawfully. And the land of Israel did not for

bid pagans to dwell in the land, as the Gibeonites and captives.

Proposition 2. Neither did the good kings of Israel, nor may Christian kings, compel any of their subjects to the fellowship of the church, to yield up themselves to their covenants, sacraments, and censures, unless they were fit for it and persuaded to it. This concerneth the second commandment, as the former did the first, Genesis 9:27; Psalm 110:3; Exodus 12:48. If he will eat the passover, then let him first circumcise his males; else he may forbear both.

Proposition 3. It is not lawful for magistrates to suffer to live, first, Blasphemers of the true God, whether Christians or pagans, within their power, Daniel 3:29, and 6:26; 1 Kings 20:23,28,42, whether in the land of Israel or out of it; yet Ahab no type of Christ. Secondly, Israelites or Christians apostate to idolatry, Deuteronomy 17:2–7, in respect of their apostasy from the covenant, verse 2. Thirdly, Witches, Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:27, with 22–23. Fourthly, Seducers to idolatry, Deuteronomy 13:1 to 5:11; and to heresy, Matthew 5:15; 2 Peter 2:13; Deuteronomy 13:10; Zechariah 13:3.

Objection. But is not this to punish a man for his conscience, and so to act contrary to the doctrine in hand?

Answer. It is not conscience that bindeth to these sins, but sinning against light of conscience. Blasphemers, apostates, witches, heretics, are *αὐτοκα-τάκριτοι*, Titus 3:10–11. Paul hath tender respect of an ignorant,

weak conscience, 1 Corinthians 3:7,10–11; not so of a hardened, 1 Timothy 4:2. Such a conscience doth not extenuate, but aggravate sin, as being a punishment of sin against light and conscience.

Proposition 4. Magistrates may compel church members to observe church orders according to the word, and others not to disturb them, Ezra 7:26–27.

Proposition 5. Magistrates may compel all to hear the word of God, Acts 3:22–23; yet if men take exception at the calling, as being either too Romish, too near to Rome, or too far from it, let men be first convinced of the lawfulness to hear the word of God from any, Jeremiah 28:1–6; 2 Chronicles 35:21–22.

Proposition 6. No man can pretend conscience for atheism; for no nation is so barbarous, but is taken with conscience of a God.

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Use 2. To inquire, How then do ministers and churches bind conscience? Psalm 149:6, to Matthew 16:19, and 18:18.

Answer. Not by any injunctions of their own, but by ministerial declaring the commandments of God, and the Holy Ghost ratifying the same from Christ.

Use 3. To refute the popish and prelatical error of human laws binding conscience.

Use 4. To allow power to magistrates, where God alloweth it, Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:7; hence give them honour, else their power is violated and taken away, Matthew 6:4–5. The former objection (before) may be propounded and resolved thus:

Objection. If blasphemers, idolaters, seducers to idolatry and heresy, be punishable even with death, then conscience is subject to coercive power.

Answer. Conscience is either natural, Romans 2:14, weak, 1 Corinthians 8:7, or seared, through the just judgment of God blinding the mind and conscience and hardening the heart, thereby to punish sin against conscience, or at least the not receiving of the truth with love, 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:10–11; Romans 1:28. Natural conscience is not to be strained, according to proposition 1. (*supra*); 2 Timothy 2:25–26; weak conscience is not to be despised, Romans 14:3; seared conscience doth not extenuate but increase both sin and punishment, Isaiah 44:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12; Romans 1:28,32; especially after once or twice admonition, Titus 3:10.

Doctrine 2. It is neither in the power of the king, nor in the dexterity of the craft-masters of wickedness, to discharge a man of his warfare in the day of death, פּעֲלֵי-רָשָׁע, are craft-masters of wickedness, Psalm 94:4,16.

Reasons of the former: 1. From God's determinate appointment of our ends, Job 14:5; Acts 17:26.

Reason 2. From the preciousness of a man's life and soul—greater than any man can give to God, Psalm 49:7–9.

Reason 3. From the impotency of princes to deliver and discharge themselves from the war and stroke of death, Psalm 23:29.

Reason of the latter, from the wages and desert of sin, Romans 6:23.

Use 1. To teach us there is a warfare between a man and death, 1 Corinthians 15:26,54; as appeareth,

first, From the resemblance between death and war, in the effects. In death, as in war, we conflict *de summa rerum*, about all our chiefest worldly comforts, goods, lands, honours, pleasures, wife, children, liberty, life. In death, as in war, greatest violence is offered to us, and we use against it all our strength, Job 2:4; 1. Of nature; 2. Of art, diet, and physic. Death, as war, conquering, carrieth captive to the prison of the grave, and many to hell, if death be not overcome; death feedeth on them, Psalm 49:14. Secondly, From the causes of this war: our earnest desire to preserve ourselves, John 21:18; 2 Corinthians 5:4; whence death by philosophers was counted, τῶν φοβερῶν φοβερωτάτον, as most contrary and destructive to nature. Again, sin, which brought in death, Romans 5:12, addeth a venomous sting to it, 1 Corinthians 15:56, whence, to a carnal heart, God's wrath, fear of hell, Satan's outrage, horror of conscience. Whence we are to learn, first, To prepare for this warfare; there is no avoiding it; profane confidence will not avail us, Isaiah 28:14–15.

Means or preparation against death: 1. Death to sin, Romans 6:8–9; 2. Death to the world, Galatians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 7:29–31, and 15:30–31; 3. Faith in Christ, Job 13:15; 2 Timothy 1:12; Psalm 49:1–2,5,15; 4. Walking with God, as Enoch, Genesis 5:24, with Hebrews 11:5. Enoch's privilege is thus far communicated to all such as walk with God, that, though they escape not death, yet the bitterness of death, Proverbs 11:4,19, and 12:28. Such leave their souls to God with a quiet heart, their bodies to the grave with good report, and a blessed covenant behind them to their posterity; thus death will be our advantage, Philippians 1:21. Secondly, To abhor all self-murder, as not from human nature, but from Satan. For even corrupt nature desireth to preserve itself.

Use 2. To teach us not to do evil at princes' commands, nor to refuse to do good for fear of their displeasure, for they cannot deliver us from death; this is Solomon's scope.

Use 3. To teach us to serve such a master, as to whom alone it belongeth to save from death, Revelation 1:18; Psalm 68:20.

Verse 9. All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a

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time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.

Coherence, see in verse 8. The words contain a fourth refutation of the third invention, mentioned verse 4. As who should say, Where the word of the king is, there is power; but know withal, that where this power is always obeyed, at all times submitted to, this power or rule (for it is the same word with that, verse 4) will be hurtful and pernicious to him that obeyeth it: There is a time when one ruleth over another for hurt to him. And this he proveth by his own diligent and serious observation and testimony: All this I have seen, and applied my heart, נחון את לבי, or in applying my heart to the consideration of all things done under the sun.

Doctrine 1. A penitent and prudent soul, that casteth his eyes about him, and considereth all things which are done under the sun, shall observe a time wherein that man that ruleth over another, ruleth over him for hurt to him, עת אשר שלט האדם באדם לרע לו, translated one man; better, the man, whatsoever the man be; be it Solomon—he in his rule had a time wherein he set his people a-work to erect and adorn idols' temples, and this was the rent and ruin of the ten tribes, 1 Kings 11:31,33; 2 Kings 12:28–29, with chapters 14–16; their apostasy and captivity. Judah also followed the way of Israel to their apostasy and captivity also, 2 Kings 17:18–19; so David before him, 2 Samuel 11:4, 15, and 14:1,17; so Asa, 2 Chronicles 16:10; so Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 18:1, with 21:3,6,8,10; so Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:16–18; so Josiah, 2 Chronicles 25:22.

Reason 1. From God's good pleasure to leave every child of his at some time or other to some spiritual desertion, 2 Chronicles 32:31. Wherein God's counsel is, first, To make us feel our need of Christ, Isaiah 38:14; a soul oppressed crieth out for an undertaker or surety. Secondly, To make

us like unto Christ, Luke 22:53; yet with this difference, he being sifted, no chaff or dross was found in him, John 14:30; not so we, Luke 22:31–32. Thirdly, To make us know what is in our hearts, 2 Chronicles 32:31, especially self-exalting, 2 Chronicles 32:25; Psalm 30:6–7; and to heal it, 2 Corinthians 12:7; Genesis 32:25. Fourthly, To chasten the people's sin, who might idolise their rulers, 2 Samuel 24:1; Lamentations 4:20.

Reason 2. From the power of corrupt nature, which, though subdued to grace, will sometimes break the yoke, as Esau did Jacob's yoke, Genesis 27:40.

Use 1. To teach magistrates a holy and humble jealousy over themselves, and watchfulness also over themselves and one another. (The application of this to our present governor, see in the schedule annexed.¹)

Use 2. To teach the people not to swallow down all the commandments of their rulers, lest sometimes they should rule you to evil; this is Solomon's scope here, Acts 4:19; Micah 6:16; Hosea 5:11.

Use 3. To provoke people to pray for their magistrates, that Christ would keep them in that time of trial.

Verse 10. *And so I saw the wicked buried who had come and gone from the place of the holy and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity.*

This verse doth depend upon the former, by way of prevention of an objection—thus, if one rule over another to his hurt, the hurt will as well rebound to him that ruleth as to them that are ruled. Wicked rulers often come to an untimely end, yea, want burial, Ecclesiastes 3:6; 1 Kings 14:11, 16:4, and 21:23–24; 2 Kings 9:33–34; and infamy follows them after death, 1 Kings 15:30. Whereto Solomon answereth, and by his own experience confirmeth it, It is not always so; I have seen a time wherein one ruleth over another to his hurt—that is, to the hurt of him that is ruled, to wit of the subject, not so of the ruler—and in so doing, that is, in ruling wickedly to the hurt of others, I have seen the wicked buried who had come and gone from the place of the holy; I have seen also the wicked forgotten in the city wherein they have so done, that is, had so wickedly ruled: this is also vanity. This increaseth vanity amongst men, and aggravateth the vanity of the condition of the sons of men.

Doctrine 1. The place or seat of judgment is the place of the holy One.

For he speaketh here of wicked rulers, whom he describeth to have been conversant in the judgment-seat—in a Hebrew phrase, they had come and gone from the place of the holy; holy, in the singular

¹ To an American edition, I presume; not reproduced in the English edition, from which this is printed.—ED.

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number, that is, of the holy One. The holy One is God, Isaiah 57:15. The place of the holy One is heaven, Isaiah 66:1; the temple, Acts 21:28; the throne or seat of judgment, Psalm 82:1; the humble heart, Isaiah 57:15. The third is here meant; for he speaketh of kings, verse 4, and of them as wicked, verses 9–10.

Reason 1. From God's ordinance thereof, Romans 3:1–2.

Reason 2. From his presence there, Psalm 82:2; Proverbs 29:26; 2 Chronicles 19:6.

Reason 3. From his ends there chiefly to be attended, 2 Chronicles 19:6.

Use. To teach magistrates to put off carnal affections, as shoes were put off by Moses, when we come to the judgment-seat, Exodus 3:5; the like was done by Joshua, chapter 5:15.

Doctrine 2. When a wicked ruler findeth a burial, and the memory of his wicked rule is buried with him, it is a vanity; or himself findeth a funeral, and his wicked rule no memorable obloquy.

When wicked rulers come to an untimely end, and their tyranny meeteth with just obloquy, it doth not a little avail, first, To the honour of God, Exodus 14:17, and 15:1; secondly, To the edification and warning of men; Sennacherib in Herodot.; so Virgil's Mezentius: *Discite Justitiam*. For want of this Belshazzar was reprov'd, Daniel 5:20, &c. But yet it sometimes cometh to pass they do meet with burial, and no infamy upon their names, partly by the power of their successors, their children, and partly by a worse succeeding in their room.

Reason of the vanity of this: 1. It is an occasion of great growth of wickedness, verse 11; for, first, The subjects comply with wicked rulers, if they meet with no great calamity in their life or death; secondly, Other wicked princes presume to do the like upon their wicked examples, indemnity, and impunity, verse 11.

Reason 2. It is a fruit of the curse brought upon the civil state through the fall of our first parents, otherwise all evil should befall evil ones, and all good good ones.

Reason 3. It is no advantage to wicked princes, so buried and so forgotten; for the less check they meet withal here, the more they shall meet withal hereafter, Ecclesiastes 5:8.

Use 1. To teach us to give honour to God, and to take warning to ourselves when we see God calling princes to account, Psalm 76:12, and 107:40; Job 12:21, &c.

Use 2. To teach princes and rulers to rule in the fear of God righteously, 2 Samuel 23:3, so they may expect comely burial and honourable memorial, 2 Chronicles 16:14, 24:16, 32:33, and 35:24. Not so others, 2 Chronicles 21:19, &c., and 33:20; Jeremiah 22:18–19.

Use 3. To teach all men, even private men, to do well in our generations; for if God recompense princes, surely he will not spare meaner persons, Proverbs 10:7; Psalm 112:6.

Verse 11. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

Doctrine 1. Sentence is not so soon executed as passed against an evil work, Zephaniah 2:2. When an evil work is done, sentence passeth speedily, Zechariah 5:1–4; a flying roll, to imply swiftness, Malachi 3:5; Genesis 4:7. Sin lieth at the door, as a sergeant or jailer, to watch and keep and dog him wheresoever he goeth. No sinner but goeth up and down with his keeper, Psalm 37:13, and 9:16; 2 Peter 2:1,3.

The sentence is passed speedily, first, In God's counsel, Micah 2:3; Jeremiah 18:11; secondly, In the curse of God's law, Genesis 2:17; Galatians 3:10; thirdly, In the conscience of the sinner oftentimes, 2 Samuel 24:10, like the sentence written on the wall of the house, Daniel 5:5; fourthly, In the preparation of the causes to conviction and execution, to wit, in the causes, one link draweth another. By David's adultery with Bathsheba a spirit of uncleanness got into his house; hence Amnon defileth Tamar, she was Absalom's sister, and that draweth Absalom to revenge; Absalom's beauty draweth on the king to pardon him; Bathsheba's father being Eliam, 2 Samuel 11:3, and Eliam being the son of Ahithophel, 2 Samuel 23:34, turned off Ahithophel from David to Absalom, 2 Samuel 15:31, yet is not executed speedily, Genesis 6:3; Numbers 14:33; 1 Kings 21:29.

Question. But why should the Lord be pleased to delay execution, seeing many evils grow upon it? as, first, It obscureth God's justice; the punishment

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of a sin coming so long after seemeth rather a calamity than a just judgment of this or that sin; secondly, God's providence is hence called into question, Psalm 73:11–12; Malachi 2:17; thirdly, Among men, the good are discouraged, Psalm 73:12–14, and the wicked are hardened, as in the text.

To these objections may be answered, first, God can clear his justice in his own time, and in his own way, by suitableness of the judgment, Judges 1:7, and remorse of conscience, Genesis 42:21; secondly, God will in every age clear his providence by some remarkable judgment, Psalm 9:16, and 58:10–11; thirdly, Good men must judge of things by the word, not by present events, Psalm 73:17. If some men be hardened, it is that God aimed at for their incorrigibleness, Isaiah 1:5, or for the wickedness of their fathers, Hosea 4:14.

Reason of delay: 1. Meet it is God should show his patience as well as his justice, Exodus 34:6; Psalm 145:8. Slow to anger, good to all, especially having placed the government of the world in the hand of a mediator, Exodus 33:2–3. Secondly, To lead on some to repentance, Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9, 15; 1 Timothy 1:16. Thirdly, To reward humiliation, though not sincere, 1 Kings 21:29; 2 Chronicles 12:6–7. Fourthly, To give way to others to fulfil the measure of their sins, Genesis 15:16, and so to make way for the treasuring up and showing forth his power and wrath, Romans 2:5; Deuteronomy 32:34–35.

Doctrine 2. The delay of punishment upon sin filleth the heart of sinners to do evil.

Filleth them, first, With resolution to sin, Jeremiah 44:16–17, and with boldness, Isaiah 3:9; secondly, With custom in sin, Jeremiah 13:23; thirdly, With skill in sin, Jeremiah 14:22.

Reason 1. From the depraving of their judgments by this means; either to think, first, There is no God, Psalm 14:1, or at least that he regardeth not things below; secondly, That God is like themselves, Psalm 50:21; thirdly, That such and such evils are no sin.

Reason 2. From the depravation of our wills by impunity, not to fear God, Psalm 55:19.

Use 1. To take notice of the venomous corruption of our nature, that can suck such poison out of such a sweet attribute as the patience of God.

Use 2. To beware of such an abuse.

Use 3. To exhort us to be more filled with forwardness to good, and hatred of evil; first, By the judgments of God against sin; secondly, By the mercies of God to the godly.

Use 4. To teach courts and churches, neither of them to be too slow in executing sentence against evil-doers.

Verse 12. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

Verse 13. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

In the former verse Solomon declared the abuse which wicked men make of God's patience, and of man's also: because sentence is not executed speedily against an evil work, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. In these words he giveth an antidote against this abuse, taken from his own knowledge and certain observation of the good estate of them that fear God, and the evil estate of the wicked.

The good estate of the godly he amplifieth, first, By the diverse events: though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his punishment be prolonged, yet it shall be well with them that fear God. Secondly, By the contrary estate of the wicked: it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days; the brevity whereof is amplified by the simile of a shadow. Thirdly, By the cause of this their different estate: because the one feared before the face of God, the other doth not fear before God. Fourthly, By an argument from Solomon's own testimony thereof, and that not out of conjecture, but out of his own certain knowledge.

Doctrine 1. Howsoever a wicked man may sin oft and escape long, yet a godly-wise man may fully assure himself and others that it shall go well with them that fear God; but neither well nor long with the wicked.

Sin oft. The text saith an hundred times—a certain number of multitude for an uncertain. מאריך לו is not *And his days be prolonged*. Days is not in the sentence; and that is denied in the next verse, 'He shall not prolong his days'. But the meaning is, And a prolonging be to him—to wit, of

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execution of sentence, if punishment be long delayed, and so he long escapeth.

Yet surely I know. And so a godly-wise man may know and assure himself and others, 'that it shall be well with them that fear God'.

Question. Why doth he not rather say, that it shall not be well with the wicked? That would make the opposition more direct.

Answer. First, Because many times the long continuance of the wicked in their sinful course with impunity is a punishment and hardship to the godly: Saul's reign is David's banishment; Ahab's reign is Micaiah's imprisonment, 1 Kings 22:27. Secondly, Because the godly are apt to stumble at the sight of the impunity and prosperity of the wicked, compared with their own straits, Psalm 73; Jeremiah 12:1; and the godly must first have cordials before the wicked receive their corrosives: Matthew 24:34,41; Isaiah 3:10-11; Proverbs 11:31; Psalm 55:23; Job 15:31, &c.

Question. How or wherein doth it appear that, notwithstanding the long patience of God to wicked men, yet certainly it shall go well with the godly, but neither well nor long with the wicked?

Answer. First, In that it is a pledge of greater mercy reserved for them that fear God, the more that God prolongeth his patience and long-sufferings to wicked men, Romans 9:22-23. Secondly, In that this long patience of God to the wicked is an evidence of greater wrath prepared and treasured up for them, Romans 2:4-5. Thirdly, In that there is a speedy shortening of the rage of the wicked over the godly, Psalm 125:3. Fourthly, In that the days of the wicked are always cut off suddenly, before the time either of their expectation, or at least of their preparation, Amos 8:9. The sun shall go down at noon implieth partly a great change and immediate from height to depth, Psalm 92:7, and partly a sudden change, before the business and the day be half finished.

Reason. From the fear of God in the godly, and the want of the fear of God in the wicked. This reason is expressly given in the text: 'It shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him', verse 12. 'It shall be evil with the wicked, because he feareth not before God', verse 13.

Before God. The Hebrew is, Before the face of God—that is, before, first, His presence in his ordinances,

Psalm 105:14; secondly, His presence in his providence, Proverbs 5:21; Psalm 119:168, and 34:16.

Fear of God. First, In holy reverence of his great and glorious majesty and goodness, Psalm 130:4; Hosea 3:5; secondly, In humble sense of our great weakness and unworthiness, Philippians 2:12-13; thirdly, In awful shunning to displease him, Proverbs 16:6.

Use 1. To restrain us from quarrelling at God's providence, because it may sometimes seem to go worse with God's people than with the wicked, Jeremiah 12:1. Say it confidently, and it shall go well with the godly, Psalm 73:1; not so to the wicked.

Use 2. To take heed of abusing God's patience unto hardness of heart in sin.

Use 3. To support the spirit of such as fear God in the midst of the prosperity of the wicked, and in the midst of their own afflictions.

Use 4. To teach us the fear of God; fear before his face, his ordinances, and his providences. It is a certain presage of good success, 2 Chronicles 20:3,12,15, and 11:12; it is an overcoming or denial of ourselves, which else being wanting would enfeeble us, 1 Samuel 2:9; Judges 7:2.

Verse 14. There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.

Verse 15. Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.

In these verses, to the end of the twelfth verse of the ninth chapter, Solomon declareth and setteth forth another vanity which he observed in the world, the promiscuous successes and events that befall good men and bad, chiefly by the misgovernment of princes.

In this fourteenth verse he propoundeth one kind of it, 'That there be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; and on the contrary, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous'.

This promiscuous event he amplifieth, first, By the adjunct vanity of it: there is a vanity done upon

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the earth: I said this is also vanity—vanity ushereth it in, and waiteth upon it after, verse 14; both are vanity, both that the just find according to the work of the wicked, and that the wicked find according to the work of the just. Secondly, By the effect it wrought in Solomon, which is the use he made of it, to commend mirth. And that he proveth, first,

By the equality of the goodness hereof, the free and cheerful use of the good things of this life being equal to any other course which a man can take in such a cause; secondly, By the permanency of this good with him as a sauce to sweeten all his labour in the days of his life which God giveth him, verse 15. The coherence of these words with the former is, that Solomon saw some wicked rulers honourably buried, the punishment of some offenders prolonged, and thereby to outward view it might appear that the estate of wicked men was better than the estate of the godly, save only that faith knoweth the contrary, verse 10–13; he thereby taketh occasion to observe and set forth this vanity more distinctly and fully, the promiscuous estate and success of good and bad men in these, and in the following verses. The promiscuous events are of three sorts: first, That the good men fare as the evil should fare, and that evil fare as good should do, text. Secondly, That sometimes both fare alike. If good men fare well, so do the wicked; if the wicked fare evil, so do the good, chapter 9:1–10. Thirdly, That men of best ability and dexterity are disappointed of their hopes and means, verse 11–12.

Doctrine 1. It is a vanity to be observed upon the earth, that sometimes it befalleth just men according to the work of the wicked, and it sometimes befalleth the wicked according to the work of the righteous, Luke 16:25; Psalm 73:12–14.

Reason 1. Through the wickedness or weakness of rulers in commonwealth and church, Psalm 12:8; Isaiah 59:15; Malachi 3:15; 2 Samuel 16:3–4; Ezekiel 13:22.

Reason 2. Through the wise providence of God, dispensing good things to the wicked, to lead them to repentance, Romans 2:4, or else to harden them in impenitency, Romans 2:5. Dispensing evil things to the righteous, first, For chastisement and mortification of sin, 1 Corinthians 11:32; secondly, For trial, Daniel 11:35; Isaiah 27:9; thirdly, For our good at the

latter end, Deuteronomy 8:16; Hebrews 5:8; Job 23:10. All these three ends are coincident.

Reasons of vanity. There is a fourfold vanity in it: 1, Of uncomeliness, Proverbs 11:22, and 26:1,8.

Reason 2. Of unprofitableness; the wicked make an ill use of it, Psalm 52:19; so do the godly, Psalm 73:13–14.

Reason 3. Vanity of uncertainty, Acts 20:22, not knowing what shall befall me.

Reason 4. Of confusion, following the fall, and the condition of all earthly things after the fall, Romans 8:20; not that there is any vanity in God's administration of itself—all his acts are wisdom and righteousness—but, first, In men it is a sinful vanity; to wit, of unprofitableness in the sufferers, and of folly in the doers of it—viz., in such as exalt the wicked, and discourage the good. Secondly, In other creatures, I mean in the disposal of them in this manner, it is a penal vanity.

Use for the wicked, Not to account themselves righteous, though it happen to them according to the work of the righteous. Either thence learn to repent, Romans 2:4, or look for wrath upon wrath, verse 5. This use is gathered from the verse before the text, Ecclesiastes 8:13.

Use for godly men, To commend mirth to a godly heart, as here Solomon doth: 'Then I commended mirth', or joy, verse 15; that is, first, A free use of the creatures, meat, drink, and the like, verse 15, and chapter 9:7–9; secondly, Contentment in a man's estate; thirdly, Delight therein.

Reason 1. If it fare well with us, it is better with us than many other just men.

Reason 2. It abideth with us or cleaveth to us of our labour; it is the result of our labour through mercy.

Reason 3. Joy is as oil to the wheels; it strengtheneth us to all the duties of our calling, or maketh them easy, Nehemiah 8:10.

Reason 4. If it go ill with us, yet we have conveniency, yea, much more than we deserve, Genesis 32:10; Lamentations 3:20; and mourning for crosses doth more hurt than good, 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Objection. But ought not a man to be humbled under crosses?

Answer 1. Yes; but when we have been humbled,

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then bear all cheerfully and thankfully, 1 Samuel 1:7,18; 2 Samuel 12:20–24; 2 Corinthians 12:7–9. Abandon, therefore, sullenness and discontentment under crosses. 2. To follow diligent labour in our calling. It is that whereto joy and mirth is joined; the same word with that, Genesis 29:34; Ecclesiastes 5:12. 3. To reckon our lives by days, as the wise man here doth, Psalm 90:12; Genesis 47:9. It will help us, first, Not to promise ourselves multitudes of years, Psalm 90:5; secondly, To prepare to give account for each day, Psalm 39:12; thirdly, To improve and make use of present opportunity, Hebrews 3:15; fourthly, To forecast provision for the day, Matthew 6:11. 4. To look at every day as a new gift of God, text, verse 15.

Verse 16. When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:)

Verse 17. Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it ; yea further; though a wise man think to know it , yet shall he not be able to find it .

In the two former verses Solomon observed it as a great vanity, the promiscuous event and estate that befell good men and bad, especially through the misgovernment of princes. In these two verses he observeth the like promiscuous event and estate of both good and bad from the work and providence of God; which various dispensation of all events alike to all sorts of men, good and bad, Solomon here setteth forth by the adjunct thereof, his own serious meditation and study, and inquiry after the reason of it, after the wisdom and counsel of God's proceeding in it, which study and meditation of his he enlargeth and amplifieth in these verses, and in the former part of the next chapter. In these verses by two adjuncts: first, By the restlessness and assiduity of it, so as he found no rest nor sleep night nor day to seek out this matter, verse 16. Secondly, By the fruitlessness of it, he could not find what he sought; which he setteth forth by a double amplification, *a diversis*: 1. Of labour in searching—though a man labour in seeking it out; 2. Of wisdom—yea, if a wise man think and purpose, and

profess to seek it and to find it out, and to know it, yet shall he not be able to attain it, verse 17.

Doctrine 1. A man that shall apply his heart to search and discern the wisdom of God in his work and dealing with the righteous and with the wicked, though himself be wise and his labour great to find it out, yet his labour shall be fruitless, and himself restless. He speaketh here of the wisdom of God in his work and dealing with the righteous and with the wicked, both alike, as appeareth by the verse before, verse 15, and the verses following, chapter 9:1–3. His labour shall be fruitless, for he shall not find out what he sought for, verse 17; and himself restless, as Solomon himself confesseth (and he seemeth to speak it of himself), there is that

neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes, Psalm 73:16; Jeremiah 12:1, 2; Habakkuk 1:13–15; Job 9:10–12.

Reasons why fruitless: 1. From God's concealment many times of the causes and reasons of the afflictions of his people, especially in the beginning of their troubles till towards the end. Job was long before he saw the reason of God's strange hand upon himself, Job 10:2–7; and it is a great part of their affliction that they cannot discern the reason of God's dealing with them. God concealeth his mind till we have learned to prefer his wisdom and will above our own. When Job stooped to this, Job 40:2–5, with 42:5–6, then he not only saw a gracious issue, but the cause of all his troubles, from God's conference with Satan.

Reason 2. From the power of God to have brought to pass any ends of his own and ours in dealing bountifully with the godly, and justly with the wicked, if it had pleased him. Though sanctified affliction be wholesome to the godly, yet God was able to have humbled and healed them without such outward crosses and afflictions. The spirit of grace could do it effectually by the word. That God chooseth rather to do it by afflictions, what man can find the reason? Or if some reason might be rendered in regard of our fellowship with the first Adam in sin and vanity, and with the second Adam in afflictions, yet why might not God have chosen rather to afflict the godly in the inner man; than in the outward man? and why might not the wicked have undergone greater afflictions in this world?

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Reason 3. From the free choice which God maketh of some men, both of the good and of the bad, to deal well with some of both sorts, and to deal sharply with others of both sorts, Job 21:23–25.

Reasons why restless: 1. From the disproportion between the faculty and the object. The wisdom of God in these ways of his providence is beyond our reach; and therefore, as when the members of the body are reached and stretched beyond their compass, it chaseth away all sleep and rest; so when the mind is set upon the rack by such transcendent meditations, it rendeth the soul with vexation and restless disquietness.

Reason 2. From the force of earnest intension of the mind in difficult and abstruse studies, to waste and scatter those cool and moist vapours which rise from the stomach to cool the brain, and would stop the passage of the animal spirit to the senses, and so procure sleep. For the animal spirits of the brain, being heated with agitation and study, do also heat

those vapours, and so attenuate and disperse and spend them that they cannot stop the passage of the spirits to the senses, and so sleep is chased away. This is a natural cause, which is the more aggravated by the hand of God taking away natural rest from such as cannot rest satisfied in His will, unless they may be of his counsel, Job 33:13.

Use 1. To teach us to content ourselves in seeking out by our own wisdom the counsel of God in his dealing with ourselves or others; but by faith and patience to wait for a good issue. Faith, first, Seeth God's hand in all, and sanctifieth the name of his sovereignty; he is the potter, we the clay; wisdom, Job9:4, righteousness, Jeremiah 12:1, grace to his people, and faithfulness, Psalm 119:75. Secondly, Stirreth up to prayer for a profitable use of all, Psalm 143:10. Thirdly, Humbles us under the mighty hand of God, 1 Peter 5:6. Fourthly, Directeth us to the word for further counsel, Psalm 73:17.

Use 2. To confine our evening meditations to matters within our compass. Evening meditations should rather be devotional than scholastical, to beat our brain will leave it without fruit or rest.

Use 3. To acknowledge it, as Solomon here doth penitentially, as a vanity in ourselves, that we have sought to find out God's work and wisdom by our own wisdom.

CHAPTER IX.

Verse 1. For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.

Verse 2. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

In the two last verses of the former chapter Solomon set forth his serious inquisition after the reason and wisdom and counsel of God in ordering the like promiscuous events to the righteous and to the wicked; and he sets it forth by a twofold adjunct: 1. The restlessness of himself in it; he saw no sleep with his eyes, verse 16. 2. The fruitlessness of it; he could not find it, though a wise man and labouring to find it, chapter 8:17.

In these two verses he setteth forth the same inquisition by the effect it wrought in him, the giving of his heart to declare all this, to wit, that followeth,—viz., to declare four observations, which he had found out touching this matter: first, That the righteous, and the wise, and their works are in the hand of God, verse 1. Secondly, That no man can know the love or hatred of God to themselves or others by any outward events, verse 1, or by all that is before them, before their eyes, obvious to them. Thirdly, That all things come alike to all sorts of all, which he expresseth by a distribution of the subject, verse 2, to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and that sacrificeth not; to the good, and to the sinner; to him that sweareth, and to him that feareth an oath. Fourthly, That this is an evil among all things done under the sun, verse 3.

Doctrine 1. That which a man giveth his heart to seek and to find of all the ways of God, so far as he hath found it, he should also give his heart to declare it. Solomon told us, in verse 16 of the former chapter, he set his heart with much labour to seek the reason, and wisdom, and counsel of God in the promiscuous events that befall the sons of men. That which he sought he found not; but what upon

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search he did find, he here telleth us he set his heart upon it to declare it, Job 5:27; Ecclesiastes 7:25–29.

Reason 1. From the end of all God's works, whether of creation or providence. It is that they may be known, and that God may be known in them, Psalm 107:43, 78:4–7, and 111:4; no man can remember what he knoweth not, Joel 1:4.

Reason 2. From the end of all our knowledge of God, which is (this for one of them) to tell it to others, Ecclesiastes 12:9; 1 Corinthians 12:7. No light is to be put under a bushel, Matthew 5:15. All knowledge is light; talents not to be buried.

Use 1. To teach us not to be sparing this way; what we have searched and learned in any kind of good knowledge, the more ready to be to communicate it, Job 5:27, and 15:17–18.

Use 2. To teach us to inquire and search knowledge; younger persons from the more aged, to give them occasion to declare what they have searched out, Job 8:8–10; Proverbs 20:5. A seasonable question is here a good bucket.

Doctrine 2. The righteous, the wise, and their works are in the hand of God, verse 1,—that is, first, He is the disposer of them after his own will; they are in his power and pleasure to order one way or other; so the phrase taken, Genesis 16:6, and 31:29; Job 1:12, and 2:6. Secondly, He reserveth the knowledge of them, and of the disposal of them, to himself; so the phrase also taken, Acts 1:7. Both these meanings are here pertinent, Psalm 31:15; Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 20:24.

Reason 1. From God's absolute sovereignty over the creatures, Jeremiah 18:6. As being the cause: first, The efficient, procreant, and conservant; secondly, The final cause of them all, Romans 11:36.

Reason 2. From the precious esteem and regard which God hath of his righteous servants and their ways, Isaiah 43:2, 4; Psalm 1:6.

Reason 3. From the righteous men's recommendation of themselves and their ways into the hand of God, Psalm 37:5; 2 Timothy 1:12. These also wisely consider and observe how God keepeth and guideth them, Psalm 107:43.

Reason 4. From the wicked man's slighting and despising his own way, Proverbs 19:16. As he that regardeth not to choose his way, but goeth through thick and thin, he despiseth his way; so he that

careth not whether his way be pure or filthy. These three last reasons show why the righteous and their ways are more expressly said to be in the hand of God, than wicked men and their ways be, though the ways of the wicked are in God's hand also, Isaiah 45:1, 10:5–6, and 37:29; Psalm 125:5.

Use 1. For comfort to the righteous. If we and our ways be in the hand of God, where can they be safer? there let us rest. And therefore also in all estates to be the more contentful, Psalm 39:9, thankful, Job 1:21, and fruitful; and so to grow the more humbled in sinful failings, and the more enlarged in faith on God in well-doing. It might humble a good heart, that himself fell into any sin; but the more that God in displeasure gave him up to it Isaiah 63:17. In well-doing, it is a comfort to have done well, but much greater that God helped us, 1 Chronicles 29:10, 14.

Use 2. To instruct us to be wise as well as righteous, in not trusting to our own power and will, for both are in God's hand, Proverbs 3:5–6; James 4:13–15.

Use 3. To abase wicked men, whom God doth not vouchsafe to carry in his hand, neither them nor their works.

Doctrine 3. No man can certainly discern the love or hatred of God to himself or others, by their outward events and estates.

No man knoweth. Knowledge is *certi axiomatis iudicium*. If no man knoweth, then no man certainly discerneth.

Love or hatred—to wit, of God; for of God he spake in the words next before: ‘The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hands of God.’

To himself or others; for if he discern not the love or hatred of God to himself, much less to others; and if he could discern it to himself, he might to others; and if to others, he might discern it to himself; for outward things are alike discernible in both.

By all that is before them—that is, by all things lying open to their outward senses, as prosperous or adverse estates and events, Matthew 6:19–20. If a man might know the love of God to him by outward things, those outward things would be as treasure to him, which Christ denieth.

Reason 1. From the corruption and changeableness

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of outward things, Matthew 6:19, and therefore they cannot be certain evidences of an unchangeable and uncorruptible estate.

Reason 2. From the like events and successes and estates to all, Ecclesiastes 9:2. Good name to Demetrius, 3 John 12, as well as to the false prophets, Luke 6:26. Wealth to the rich epicure, Luke 12:16, as well as to Abraham, Genesis 24:35, and to Isaac, Genesis 26:12. Pleasure to the wicked, Job 21:11–12, as well as to the godly, Ecclesiastes 2:10. Health and strength to epicures, Psalm 73:4, as well as to Caleb, Joshua 14:11. Beauty to Absalom and such, 2 Samuel 14:25; Proverbs 11:22, as well as to Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel. Long life to Ishmael, Genesis 25:17, as well as to Isaac, Genesis 35:28. Learning and wisdom to the Egyptians, Acts 7:22, as well as to Moses and Daniel, Acts 7:22; Daniel 1:17. Crosses to bastards, Psalm 78:33, as well as to sons, Psalm 73:14; Hebrews 12:8. Sickness to the disobedient, Deuteronomy 28:59–60, as well as to David, Psalm 41:8. Poverty to Job’s scornors, Job 30:3, as well as to Lazarus, Luke 16:20. Sudden death to the disobedient, Psalm 55:23; Proverbs 29:1, as well as to Jeroboam’s good son, 1 Kings 14:12–13. Violent death; Jonathan died in the field, and by the hand of the uncircumcised, as well as Saul, 1 Samuel 31:1–2.

Reason 3. From the curse and vanity that lieth upon all the creatures by the fall, Genesis 3:17. It is a bondage to the creature to minister to

the wicked, not to minister to the godly, Romans 8:20–21. This is the reason of the former reason.

Objection Did not Cain know God's acceptance of Abel above himself, by an outward sign of fire from heaven, or the like? Genesis 4:4–5.

Answer That was a miraculous event, as was also the fire that fell upon Elias's sacrifice, 1 Kings 18:38; but Solomon speaketh of ordinary common events.

Objection 2. But is there not great difference of a godly man's bearing the events and estates that befall him, and a wicked man's bearing his?

Answer Yes; but Solomon speaketh not of outward fruits, but outward events.

Objection 3. Psalm 41:11.

Answer. David knew not the favour of God from the outward deliverance, but from the grace of God

secretly revealed in it. So any benefits sprinkled with the blood of Christ may hold forth everlasting mercies, Psalm 136:23–25.

Use 1. Against papists: first, Then outward prosperity is no outward sign of the church, though Bellarmine make it his fifteenth note, *De Notis Ecclesiae* lib. iv. cap. 18. Secondly, Who abuse this place from the corrupt vulgar Latin translation, to undermine and destroy the assurance of faith of the love of God to a faithful soul, against evident Scripture, 1 John 3:14, &c.; 1 Corinthians 2:12; Romans 8:16; 2 Peter 1:10. It is a whorish church that bringeth not up her children to know their father.

Use 2. To teach us to judge wisely of the chastisements of the godly, not to misconstrue God's meaning in them to ourselves, or others lying under them, Psalm 42:1–3. This misjudging was the sin of Job's friends, for which God's wrath was kindled, Job 42:7.

Use 3. To warn wicked men neither to bless themselves in their prosperity, as if that were a sign of God's favour, Zechariah 11:5; nor in their adversity to promise to themselves impunity in another world, because they have their punishment in this world.

Use 4. To exhort to look at things within us, and from us, for the knowledge of God's love to us. Within us: 1. The testimony of the Spirit, Romans 8:16; 1 John 3:24; 2. The gifts of the Spirit accompanying salvation, Acts 16:30–31; 1 John 14:18–19. From us: our election of God to be our God, Psalm 73:25.

Doctrine 4. All the sons of men are ranked into two sorts, righteous or wicked, good men or sinners, clean or unclean, Malachi 3:18; 1 John 5:19.

Reason 1. From God's eternal purpose to make all the vessels of the house of the world either to honour or dishonour, Romans 9:21.

Reason 2. From the different original root of all men, either flesh or spirit, John 3:6.

Reason 3. From the two different ways that all men take, Matthew 7:13–14; 1 John 3:7–8.

Reason 4. From the largeness of the two covenants, dividing all men between them, Galatians 3:10, and 4:24, &c.; Romans 6:14, &c., and 8:1,5.

Reason 5. From the integrity of the whole man, required in God's service; which being wanting,

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men serve the devil, Matthew 6:24; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13.

Use 1. Against purgatory; for presuppose the truth of the doctrine, and there be but two places for these two sorts, to be bestowed in after this life, Matthew 25:32, &c.

Use 2. To try what our estate is; every one of us belongeth either to one of these sorts, or to the other.

Marks of difference, besides the former difference mentioned in the reasons: 1. What people do we belong to? to such we are gathered after death, Numbers 20:24; Genesis 25:17; 2. Where is all a man's delight, Psalm 16:3, 26:5, and 139:21–22, and communion, Psalm 120:5; thither shall he be gathered after death; and not with the contrary, Psalm 26:9. If we delight in men for righteousness sake, then the more righteous they be, the more we delight in them, Psalm 16:3.

Doctrine 5. All the righteous in the world are also good and clean, offering sacrifices and fearing oaths; and all the wicked are also unclean, sinners, negligent sacrificers, and fearless swearers.

Good, as, first, Filled with good treasure, Matthew 12:35; secondly, Bringeth forth good fruit, Matthew 7:18, and so fitted for good uses, 2 Timothy 2:21; not so the wicked, Matthew 12:35; Titus 1:16.

Clean, first, By imputation of the righteousness of Christ, Ezekiel 36:25; secondly, By sanctification of the Spirit, Isaiah 43:3; Psalm 73:1. The wicked are neither, Matthew 7:23. The sinner erreth, first, From the rule or way, Psalm 14:3; secondly, From the mark or end, Proverbs 16:25.

Sacrificing, as, first, Observing God's statute-worship, Psalm 119:5; secondly, Setting their hearts and delight and cost upon it, 1 Chronicles 29:3, and 21:24; Genesis 4:4.

This the wicked either neglect altogether, 2 Chronicles 15:3; Psalm 119:155, or perform perfunctorily, Malachi 1:7, &c.

The righteous fear an oath, first, As not daring to take it in vain; secondly, As observing it religiously, when taken, Joshua 9:19; 2 Samuel 9:1; not so the wicked, Hosea 4:2; Jeremiah 23:10; Ezekiel 17:18–19.

Use. For trial of our estates, whether we be righteous or wicked, by these fruits.

Verse 3. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

Verse 4. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

Verse 5. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

Verse 6. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

The fourth thing that Solomon observed, and thought it meet to declare from the promiscuous events of all alike unto all, is the evil of it, especially the evil effect of it, in the hearts of the sons of men. Coherence, see in verse 1–2.

Doctrine. Amongst all the evils that are done under the sun, this equality of events to all sorts of men alike, it filleth the hearts of men with evil and madness, all their lifetime, even to their death, verse 3; as who should say, This maketh them live an ill life, and die an ill death; yea, live madly, and die madly. Moses and Aaron were as well excluded from Canaan, as the unbelieving and murmuring Israelites. Josias was as well slain by an arrow in battle against his enemies, as Ahab. Nebuchadnezzar is said to have lived forty years in a victorious reign, as well as David. See many more such like instances in verse 1, Doctrine 3.

This is an evil, first, Afflictive, both to good men, Psalm 73:21, and to evil men, Psalm 112:10; secondly, Corruptive; it filleth the hearts of men with, first, Evil of wickedness or sin; secondly, Madness, verse 3.

First, Evil of sin. The ground of this evil imagination springeth occasionally from these promiscuous events, as conceiving they flow from the not guidance of them by providence: 1. Evil imaginations in particular, that the basest life here is better than the best life hereafter, confirmed by a proverb, 'A living dog is better than a dead lion', verse 4. And this they hold forth in four instances: first, In stay and provision of supply: the living have something to trust unto, see the Hebrew, verse 4; the dead

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have neither friends, nor money, nor strength, &c. Secondly, In knowledge even of some future things: the living know that they shall die; the dead know nothing at all, verse 5. Thirdly, In rewards: the dead have no more a reward, no, not so much as a memorial of their good deeds, whilst they lived, verse 5; but the living meet with some reward here, Ecclesiastes 4:9; Esther 6:3, 10; Ezekiel 29:19. Fourthly, In the enjoyment of the objects of their affections, verse 6; their love, and their hatred, and envy is now perished, viz., they have neither affections nor objects of them left, nor any portion in things here below, beyond which they look not, verse 6. Hence the most famous of the heathens have preferred the meanest life on earth above all the hopes they had of another world. Homer reporteth of his Achilles, he had rather be a servant to a poor country clown here, than to be a king to all the souls departed; so Mæcenas in Seneca had rather live in many diseases than die. It is another evil imagination, to think God like wicked men—to wit, in liking well of them, Psalm 50:21. 2. Evil resolutions, Ecclesiastes 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:32; Isaiah 56:12. 3. Evil speeches and practices, Isaiah 10:11; Job 3:1, &c. Men's hearts are also said to be filled with madness as well as with wickedness, by occasion of like events to all, in that they break forth, first, To outrageous violence in sin, Psalm 73:5–6; secondly, To foolish, vainglorious boasting in sin. The Hebrew word cometh of a root that signifieth to praise or glory, Isaiah 3:9. And filled they be with wickedness and madness from this occasion, all their lifetime, even to death, Job 21:13; Psalm 55:19.

Use 1. To show a great difference between the righteous and the wicked. The hope of the wicked is only in this life, verse 4, Job 8:13–14; but the righteous hath his chief hope and trust in another, 1 Corinthians 15:19; Proverbs 14:32. The wicked had rather live a dog's life here, than hazard

his estate in another world. If he hasten his death, it is through Satan's efficiency; the righteous longeth for dissolution, Philippians 1:23. The wicked knoweth little of any future thing, but that he shall die, verse 5; the godly knoweth that when he dieth, he shall see God, shall be like him, &c., Job 19:25-27; 1 John 3:2. The wicked shall have reward in everlasting

fire, Psalm 9:17, but at best themselves look for none; the godly shall have a reward in eternal glory, Isaiah 40:4. The wicked shall never exercise their love any more after this life, nor shall ever meet with anything lovely, verse 6; though they shall not employ their hatred or envy about earthly things here, yet they shall both hate God, and envy the happiness of his saints; but the righteous shall abound in love to God, and in God's love to them, Psalm 16:11. We shall abound also in mutual love to all the saints and angels; the greatest strangers there will love us better than our best friends here, Psalm 17:15. Our hatred will not be wanting against Satan and wicked persecutors, Revelation 6:10; our zeal also shall then abound, (that which is here translated envy, signifieth also zeal, Isaiah 37:32). The wicked have no portion but in this life, Psalm 17:14; the portion of our inheritance is after this life, 1 Peter 1:4-5.

Use 2. Not to misconstrue God's dealings with ourselves or others. It is a root of atheism, and will make us worse than the devils; for they believe there is a God, and tremble, James 2:19.

Use 3. To teach us not to rest in a carnal condition. It leaveth us without knowledge, without reward, and without portion.

Verse 7. Go thy way eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

Verse 8. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

Verse 9. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity which he hath given thee under the sun all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

Verse 10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.

Solomon having in the former verses declared four observations which he gathered from God's dispensing like events to all, he now giveth some practical directions from the same ground: first, That a man should take all the good which the providence of God putteth into his hand, verses 7–9; secondly, That

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he should do all the good which God putteth into his hand to do, verse 10.

1. The good which he directeth a man to take is in the enjoyment of the comfortable use of all the blessings which God giveth him in this life; which blessings are chiefly five: first, Meat or bread, it to be eaten with joy, verse 7; secondly, Wine, it to be drunken with a cheerful heart, verse 7; thirdly, Garments, and they to be always white; fourthly, Ointments, and they not to be lacking to the head, verse 8; fifthly, The wife beloved, and she to be joyfully lived withal, all the days of thy vanity, verse 9.

Reason 1. From God's acceptance of our work, verse 7.

Reason 2. From the portion allotted to us of God, verse 9, especially in the joyful fellowship of his wife.

2. The good that we are in any way able to do, he exhorteth to do by a reason from the vacancy and cessation of all employment and business of mind and hand in the grave; and the grave described by our adjunct act, or walking to it, verse 10. Solomon here speaketh, not in the person of an epicure, but in the name of the Holy Ghost.

Reason 1. From the like speeches in the like sense spoken often before in his own person, chapter 2:24, 3:12–13, 22, 5:18–19, and 8:15.

Reason 2. Epicures are not wont to speak so religiously, first, Of life as vanity, which Solomon here doth feelingly, verse 9; secondly, Of the days of our life as God's gift, verse 9; thirdly, Of the course of our life as a journey to the grave, verse 10; fourthly, Of our love to our wives, and fellowship with them constantly, avoiding strange lusts, verse 9.

Objection. But garments always white, and wife always joyed in, it seemeth to deny fasts at any time.

Answer. Solomon speaketh not of extraordinary times and duties, but of ordinary course.

Doctrine 1. The uncertainty of outward events calleth all men to take all the good, and to do all the good that God putteth into their hands all the days of their life. Of the former part now, Ecclesiastes 3:12–13, 22, and 5:18–19; Acts 2:46, and 14:17, *a minore* yet it holdeth in heathens also,

Psalm 104:15. The Jews in cheerfulness used white garments, Luke 14:19; Proverbs 5:19, for joyful love of wife. Times of humiliation are not ordinary, so also times of apostasy are excepted, Hosea 9:1.

Reasons of the former part of the doctrine: 1.

from the contrary walking of wicked men, fretting and vexing themselves with the promiscuous dispensation of outward events, and filling their hearts with wickedness and madness upon that occasion, verse 3–6.

Reason 2. From God's acceptance of our work herein. It is acceptable to God that we should use cheerfully what God giveth freely and cheerfully, Psalm 145:16; Deuteronomy 26:14; for, first, It is an improvement and use of the creature to that end God gave them, Psalm 104:15, and so a fulfilling of one part of the third commandment. Secondly, The contrary is weariness to God, not to accept and use the gifts he offereth, Isaiah 7:10–13. In which respects not only godly men, but all men are bound to cheerful acceptance of God's goodness, without sadness and mourning.

Reason 3. From the portion which God giveth us in this life for our outward man, as his grace for the inner man, 2 Corinthians 12:9: first, It is God's gift and admeasurement, Ecclesiastes 5:18; his talents are to be employed. Secondly, It is our substance, supplying our wants and losses, Acts 20:24; he is a poor man in the midst of abundance that wanteth this, Ecclesiastes 5:19–20. Thirdly, It is that by occupying of which we increase our estates, Nehemiah 9:15. In special manner this to be a man's portion, is attributed to a man's joyful life with his wife, verse 7. As who should say, The best portion a man can have with a wife, is a joyful life with her all his days, as if he had no portion without this, whatsoever wealth, or friends, or beauty, or parts he had with her. Without this joyfulness with her, it were no portion at all, Proverbs 10:18. It is a portion, first, As given of God, Ecclesiastes 5:19; Proverbs 19:14; secondly, For a stay and support of his life, Genesis 2:18; thirdly, To employ for his further advantage, Proverbs 31:11–12.

Reason 4. From the wearisome vanity of this life, without making use of the comforts of it, verse 9; Psalm 78:33. Vanity, first, Of brevity, Psalm 39:5; secondly, Of vanity or emptiness, Psalm 39:6; Isaiah 55:2; thirdly, Of disappointment or frustration, Isaiah 49:4; fourthly, Corruption, Romans 8:20, 21.

Reason 5. From the necessary support of a man in his labours, verse 9. This comfortable use of the creatures is as oil to the wheels, Nehemiah 8:10.

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Reason 6. From the gift of every day of our life to us from God's hand, verse 9; Job 14:5; Psalm 31:15; Acts 17:26; therefore every day some refreshing.

Use 1. To teach the children of God to take Solomon's counsel here; for to them it is chiefly given, whose work God accepteth, in seeking reconciliation with God, and fellowship in his Christ and kingdom, Matthew 6:33; 1 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:15; Hosea 9:1.

Rules to do it safely. Observe, first, Two rules of piety: prayer before, 1 Timothy 4:4-5, and thanksgiving after, Deuteronomy 8:10. Secondly, A rule of justice; thine own, not the bread of idleness, oppression, deceit, Proverbs 31:27, 4:17, and 20:17; 2 Kings 4:7. Thirdly, A rule of sobriety, Luke 21:34. Fourthly, A rule of wisdom, 1. Regarding the end of meat and drink, which is strength and cheerfulness, Ecclesiastes 10:17. Of apparel, is beside, (1.) Necessity; (2.) Comeliness; (3.) Adorning the inner man of the heart, 1 Peter 3:3-4. 2. Regarding future times and posterity, Proverbs 21:20. 3. In frugality, saving remnants, John 6:12. Fifthly, A rule of charity and mercy in ministering part to others that want necessaries, Nehemiah 8:10.

Use 2. To stir up Christian yoke-fellows especially to this duty.

Means. First, Uprightness of heart, Job 20:5; secondly, Care of mutual pleasing, 1 Corinthians 7:33-34.

Use 3. To take heed of grieving God's Spirit, which taketh such care for our refreshing, Ephesians 4:30.

Use 4. To stir up to a Christian state and course; it is not a way of melancholy, but seasonable cheerfulness.

Use 5. To teach us to look at this life as vanity, and all the days of it, and therefore to lay up an enduring substance in the life to come, Hebrews 10:34, and patiently to bear many disappointments in this life.

Use 6. To look at every day as a gift from God, Lamentations 3:23, and therefore to employ it to his advantage.

Verse 10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device nor

knowledge nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.

The doctrine from this and the three former verses was this: That the uncertainty of outward events calleth all men to take all the good, and to do all the good that God putteth into their hands all the days of our life. Of the former part, to wit, of taking all the good, hath been spoken in the three former verses. It remains now to speak of doing all the good that God putteth into our hands all the days of our life.

‘Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do’ implieth three things: first, That which falleth within our calling, or commission, or authority, as Genesis 16:6. Unlawful things, or things lawful, but out of our calling, are not to be done though they be in our hand, Micah 2:1. Secondly, That which falleth within the compass of our power and ability, as the phrase is used, Genesis 31:29; otherwise, though it be in our calling, yet having¹ power we may omit it, 2 Samuel 3:39. Thirdly, That which God giveth is opportunity and occasion to do, as the phrase is used, 1 Samuel 10:7; Galatians 6:10; Ecclesiastes 11:2,6.

Reason 1. From the vacancy and cessation of all business in the grave, whither thou goest, as in the text.

No work, no performance, or accomplishment of any business, no device. The Hebrew word signifieth two things: first, A device or cunning engine, 2 Chronicles 26:15; secondly, An account, as Ecclesiastes 7:27. Both here meant, in the grave there is no ability or opportunity either to devise or invent any good, or to make up or cast up any accounts.

Nor knowledge to understand truth or falsehood, good or evil; nor wisdom to consider of any good ends, or of any good means leading thereto.

Reason 2. From the love which we owe to God, and the measure of it, which is with all our might, Deuteronomy 6:5.

Reason 3. From our stewardship, and God’s lordship, of that which God putteth into our hands. The work is the Lord’s as our sovereign master, 1 Corinthians 16:10. Church work, Jeremiah 48:10; warlike execution, 1 Samuel 14:45; wrought with God, Colossians 3:23–24; servants’ work; we are but factors for him. There is a heavy curse upon negligence in his work, Jeremiah 48:10.

¹ Qu. ‘not having?’—ED.

Use 1. To reprove, first, Inordinate walking without a calling, when the hand findeth nothing to do, Matthew 20:6; secondly, Negligence in a calling, where the hand putteth not forth his might, Proverbs 10:4.

Use 2. To exhort all men to a conscionable faithfulness and diligence in all the work their hand findeth to do. The three reasons in the text are as so many motives. Besides, first, Satan bestirreth himself busily, and setteth all his instruments a-work to choke the work of reformation with store of tares. Secondly, The more improvement of our talents here, the greater will our reward be in heaven, Luke 19:16–19; yea, it will ashame us to receive such a plenteous recompense of reward for so small service. There will be rest enough in the grave, Isaiah 57:2, and recompense enough in heaven, 1 Corinthians 15:58. Thirdly, The hands of our fellow-labourers faint in England, what through multitude of variety of work, and what through mists and fogs of temptation about them, Nehemiah 4:14.

Use 3. To teach men to finish and perfect their accounts with God and man here, for there is no perfecting accounts in the grave, Luke 16:2.

Use 4. To look at the whole course of our lives as a journey to the grave. Whether we go to work, or to meat, or to sea, or to church, or to law, or to field, to the grave we are going; which is a matter, first, Of admonition to carnal persons to hasten spiritual preparation; secondly, Of consolation to the godly, and warning also against security, Romans 13:11.

Verse 11. I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

In the former chapter Solomon had observed this vanity, that it often befalleth the righteous according to the work of the wicked, and to the wicked according to the work of the righteous, verse 14. This vanity Solomon hath amplified in the latter end of the former chapter, and in the former part of this chapter, by sundry arguments. Amongst other arguments he amplified it with this observation,

that all events fall alike to all, to the good and to the evil, clean and unclean, holy and profane. And lest it should be said that godliness or holiness and uncleanness make no great difference in men's actions, but as Rabshakeh said, wisdom and strength arc for the war, Isaiah 36:5, so events fall out, as wisdom and strength, swiftness or speed, skill or knowledge do direct them; Solomon here denieth that, and telleth us it

is not in the power of the likeliest means to attain their ends, or to effect their work. And this he showeth us in five instances: 1. The race is not to the swift; 2. The battle is not to the strong; 3. Bread is not to the wise; 4. Riches are not to men of understanding; 5. Favour, either of princes or people, is not to men of knowledge. And besides he proveth it, first, By a reason or cause thereof in God, taken from the overruling power of the higher cause or agent, God's disposing of time and chance; for, saith he, time, or chance, or occurrence cometh to all these. The word translated *chance* here, is translated *occurrent* or occurrence, 1 Kings 4:4; secondly, By a reason or cause in man, his ignorance of his time; which is amplified by the calamity or misery following it, verse 12.

Doctrine 1. Men of the best abilities and sufficiencies for any work, do often meet with the like events and disappointments as they do that want them. Swiftest men and horses are ablest and most sufficient and most fit for the race; yet the race is not to the swift. Why then it is to them that want swiftness; it is to the slow. The strong are best able to win the battle, yet the battle is not to them; why then it is to the weak. Men of wisdom are most like to cast about for means of subsistence, for bread, Proverbs 21:20, yet bread is not to the wise; and then it is to simple people. Men of understanding are most likely to attain riches; yet riches is not to them, but to shallower heads. Men of knowledge are most likely to win favour from high and low; yet favour is not to men of knowledge, but to ignorant men, Psalm 33:16–17; Amos 2:14–16; 1 Samuel 17:50; 2 Corinthians 11:27.

Reason 1. Because chance or occurrence cometh to all these, that is, some occurrence which God's providence casteth in by the way, that disappointeth all the most likely means and abilities. As the

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stone that was cast out of David's sling, chanced by God's providence to fall and to sink into Goliath's forehead, 1 Samuel 17:49.

Reasons why God doth cast in such occurrences: 1. From his own sovereign prerogative in disposing of all events and effecting all works, Ephesians 4:11. To make a thing be is the act and name of Jehovah, which he will not communicate to the creature, Isaiah 42:8; Lamentations 3:37; hence in a man's own strength no man prevaieth, 1 Samuel 2:9.

Reason 2. From the creature's abuse of his talents: first, Either by confidence in them without God, Isaiah 10:12–29. Ajax thought it was for cowards and weaklings to call upon God for succour, not for him;

whence he was foiled; secondly, Or by arming them and using them against God, Amos 2:12–16.

Reason 3. From the time that God hath set to all a man's success and changes. Time is sometime put for the variety of conditions and changes of good or evil that befall men, as Psalm 31:15, so here. Now when these times or changes come, no means that the creature can use can prevail to withstand, Jeremiah 46:17.

Use 1. To discourage us from confidence and boasting in our gifts and parts, Jeremiah 9:23, and 17:5–6; 2 Chronicles 25:8. God can easily disappoint us, first, Either by taking away our power to use our parts, Amos 2:14–15; secondly, Or by taking away our will to use them, 2 Samuel 3:18, 21–22; thirdly, Or by giving greater parts, at least for the present, to our adversaries, Isaiah 30:16; fourthly, Or by casting in some casual event, 1 Kings 22:34; fifthly, Or by sending some unseen angels to cross us, and to help our adversaries, Joshua 5:13–14. It is a like vanity to boast in our gifts and parts, ascribing our good success to them, after achievement of our ends and desires, as in confidence in them beforehand, Amos 6:13; Psalm 44:3, 5–8.

Use 2. To prevent the discouragement of such as want gifts, and parts, or means, 2 Chronicles 14:11; 2 Corinthians 12:9. It may moderate our fears in times of strong and formidable assaults against us, Isaiah 51:12–13. It is a forgetfulness of God to fear creatures. It may support us also in our weak provisions and strength against winter journeys, huge storms and tempests, &c., Psalm 46:1, 3, and

93:3–4. The safety of mariners' and passengers' lives and estates lieth not on ropes or cables, anchors or ships, guns or weapons, but in the name and hand of the Lord; he swaddleth and ruleth the sea, Job 38:9–11.

Use 3. To remove the vulgar conceit of fortune and chance out of this place. It is nothing but God's disposing of occasions and events, casual to us, but counsels to him; what is chance to others is the Lord to Job, chapter 1:21. Chances are as much in God's hand as times, Psalm 91:10, and therefore to bear all chances that befall us, as befalling us from the wise hand and providence of the Lord.

Verse 12. For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time when it falleth suddenly upon them.

Solomon had said in the former verse that it is not in men to attain the ends which they are best furnished with sufficiency of abilities to attain, verse 11.

A double reason or cause he giveth thereof: first, One in God; times and chances are in the hand of God, and he causeth them to fall upon men in all their ways, verse 11; secondly, The other in man; his ignorance of his time, the time that he should take for every action, though he be fitted with ability to perform it, verse 12. But this was formerly spoken to by Solomon in chapter 8:6; therefore this verse may rather be taken as an amplification of the reason given in the former verse. There it was said, men are often disappointed because time and chance befall all their actions and affairs; and that he amplifieth by an argument of equals: Time also falleth upon man himself, and chance therewith; and this set forth by the adjunct ignorance of man of what times shall befall him; and that amplified by the misery which thereby falleth suddenly upon man; and that sudden misery is set forth by a twofold comparison: first, Of fishes taken in an evil net; secondly, Of birds taken in a snare.

Doctrine. The sons of men are commonly ignorant and uncertain of the times that do befall them, Genesis 27:2; Acts 20:22; James 4:14; Proverbs 27:1; Ecclesiastes 11:2,6.

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Reason 1. From the Lord's pleasure to reserve this as a sovereign prerogative in his own power, Acts 1:7.

Reason 2. To train up his servants to a child-like dependence on God's will, James 4:14–15; also to a watchful preparation for sudden changes, Mark 13:35–36; Luke 12:35–40; likewise to fruitfulness in doing all the good we can find to do for the present, Ecclesiastes 9:10, and 11:2,6; besides, to the obedience of faith, and to follow God blindfold. Foreknowledge of cross events hindereth obedience, Jonah 4:2; foreknowledge of good events maketh obedience mercenary, as John 6:26.

Reason 3. To surprise wicked men with sudden judgments, as birds in an evil snare, and fishes in a net, Psalm 37:13, and 73:18–19; Daniel 5:5–6.

Use 1. For a sad warning to wicked men not to continue in such an estate; they know not what shall befall them, what times shall come upon

them; but what evil doth come will be sudden calamity, Job 21:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:2–3.

Use 2. To reprove the vanity and impiety of such as consult with witches about the events of things, and the times that should come over them. What got Saul by the Witch of Endor, or Haman by sorcery, or Balak by Balaam?

Use 3. To learn us a holy use of our ignorance of our times, according to God's ends mentioned in the second reason.

Verse 13. *This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:*

Verse 14. *There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it:*

Verse 15. *Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.*

Verse 16. *Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.*

Verse 17. *The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.*

Verse 18. *Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.*

Solomon having observed in verse 11 that the

battle is not to the strong, bread is not to the wise, in these two verses he giveth an instance of the disappointment of great strength, by such a subject as was least able to resist it, to wit, by weak means in a weak subject, and of the neglect of such a wise man. The weak subject is, first, A little city; secondly, Few men in it. The great strength against it: first, There came a great king against it; secondly, He besieged it; thirdly, He built great bulwarks against it, verse 14. The weak means; a poor wise man found in the city, and by his wisdom delivered the city, verse 15; which act of the poor man is amplified by the slender requital of that poor man, expressed in an argument *a diversis* 'yet no man remembered

that poor man', verse 15. All which passages Solomon setteth forth, first, By the adjunct wisdom, great wisdom, which he observed in it, verse 13; secondly, By the wise observations which he gathered from it, first, That wisdom is better than strength; secondly, That a poor man's wisdom is neglected, verse 16; thirdly, That the words of the wise are more heard in quiet than the cry of a ruler among fools, verse 17; fourthly, That wisdom is better than weapons of war; fifthly, That one sinner destroyeth much good, verse 18.

Doctrine. It is a matter of much wisdom, or a matter affording much wisdom to the observers of it, a little city of small strength, and few inhabitants, besieged by a great king with strong bulwarks, to be preserved and delivered by one poor man, and yet the poor man to be neglected. So Abel, in Beth-maachah, by a wise woman, 2 Samuel 20:15, &c.; Samaria, by Elisha, 2 Kings 7:1, &c.; Jerusalem, by Isaiah, 2 Kings 19:2, &c.; Thebes, by Epaminondas; Lampsacum, from Alexander the Great, by Anaximenes; Syracuse, by Archimedes, from Marcellus; Alexandria, by Anatolius, from the Roman forces. See Valer. Max. lib. vii. c. 3; Euseb. lib. vii. c. 26.

Reasons of this power of wisdom: first, God's pleasure to magnify and exalt gifts of mind above gifts of body, as the soul itself is more excellent than the body, Proverbs 21:22; Ecclesiastes 7:19; secondly, From the wisdom of spiritual wisdom, to intrust God with the cause of the city itself, 2 Chronicles 20:12, 15; Proverbs 18:10, and 30:26.

Reason of neglect of the wise poor: first, the envy of the rich; secondly, The conceit of his want of

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means to get any wisdom but by some chance happening on a good course, Matthew 13:54–55; thirdly, From the vanity incident to all the good things of man by the fall, Ecclesiastes 1:2; fourthly, From the wisdom of God to prevent a poor wise man's pride.

Use 1. To teach wise men to observe the greater wisdom in the greater passages of human affairs by weaker means, verse 13. Where God soweth much, we should reap the more.

Use 2. To teach us wisdom is better than strength or weapons of war, verse 16, 18.

Use 3. To observe the neglected condition of a poor wise man, verse 15–16.

Use 4. To observe a time of silence and quietness, wherein to utter words of wisdom.

Use 5. To teach us that as one poor wise man may do his country much good, so may a sinner by his wickedness do his country much hurt, verse 18. Achan did much hurt, Joshua 7:11–12; Jonah also, though a good man, yet erring out of the way, and wandering in sin, Jonah 1:11.

Reason. From the contagion of sin, 1 Corinthians 5:6. The troublers of Israel are the sinners in Zion, 1 Kings 18:17–18.

CHAPTER X.

Verse 1. *Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.*

Solomon having showed the vanity incident to the wisdom of a poor man—to wit, first, To be neglected, not heard; secondly, If heard, and followed, yet to be forgotten, chapter 9:15–16. In this verse he showeth the vanity incident to the wise man, who is also honourable, to a man in reputation for wisdom and honour, which is, to be blemished with a little folly, and that little folly to be like a dead fly corrupting a precious box of ointment. So this little folly to corrupt and blemish the excellency of wisdom in an honourable person.

In the text three things are compared with three: first, A man of reputation for wisdom and honour with the precious ointment of an apothecary, secondly, A little folly with a dead fly; thirdly, The evil which a little folly doth to such a wise, honourable

man, with the evil which a dead fly doth to precious ointment, which is double: **באיש**, causeth it to putrify, **כיפי**, causeth it to send forth a putrified savour.

Doctrine. As an honourable wise man is like an apothecary's precious ointment, and a little folly like to a dead fly; so is the corruption which a dead fly causeth in that ointment like the hurt which a little folly doth to an honourable wise man.

The apothecary's precious ointment excelleth, first, In quality, as odour, John 12:3, perfuming a whole house, Canticles 1:3, and colour, Psalm 104:15; secondly, In manner of skilful confection; thirdly, In efficacy or virtue, for healing and refreshing, Proverbs 27:9. So doth the wisdom of an honourable wise man excel, first, In odour; it sendeth a sweet perfume all the country over, 1 Kings 3:28; secondly, In colour, causing the face to shine like an ointment, Ecclesiastes 8:1; Acts 6:15; thirdly, In manner of skilful confection; fourthly, In efficacy and virtue, Proverbs 27:9.

A little folly is like a dead fly; like, first, In quantity; both little. Secondly, In quality; both of them, 1. Base and contemptible; 2. Unprofitable; 3. Noisome and troublesome, Psalm 78:45; Exodus 8:24. A living fly is no better; a dead fly baser (as in alike, Ecclesiastes 9). As a dead fly causeth a precious ointment to putrify, and to send forth an evil savour, so doth a little folly corrupt and dishonour an honourable wise man.

Pineda marvelled how a dead fly should so much corrupt a precious ointment, seeing he found it not so in his country. But there is a difference, first, Of flies, which in eastern countries are many of them more venomous and noisome, Psalm 78:45; secondly, Of ointments, which in those countries are more pure and precious, which in ours are more gross and greasy; they anointed their heads and faces, Matthew 6:17; Ecclesiastes 9:7.

Solomon's folly in loving strange women corrupted his spirit to take them as wives and concubines; then to tolerate their religion; then to adorn it with countenance of goodly temples, and with maintenance of priests and sacrifices. Whence the mount Olivet, on which their temples were built, was called the mountain of corruption, 2 Kings 23:13; yea, it corrupted all Israel and Judah.

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A pang of folly in David so weakened his reputation, as offended all Israel with the savour of it, and caused a great rebellion against him.

A little folly in Asa banishing the prophet, in Jehoshaphat making affinity with Ahab, in Uzziah offering incense, in Hezekiah showing his treasures, in Josiah going to war against Pharaoh-Necho, corrupted and dishonoured the government of them all.

Reason 1. From a more observable defilement of the most pure and precious things, as in the purest clear linen the smallest spot is soon espied.

Reason 2. From the vanity which God seeth it meet the best gifts and parts should be stained withal, Isaiah 23:9.

Use 1. To exhort men of place and honour to seek after wisdom; both together maketh them as precious ointment. Folly in dignity is a great deformity, Ecclesiastes 10:6; Proverbs 26:1,8.

Use 2. To teach wise men not to bear with themselves in little follies, much less in great.

Use 3. To teach wise and honourable men to make account of an hour and power of temptation, and to deny and suspect themselves, that God may be pleased to keep them from falling shamefully.

Verse 2. A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.

Verse 3. Yea also when he that is a fool walketh by the way his wisdom faileth him and he saith to everyone that he is a fool.

These words prevent an objection which might arise from the former.

Objection. If the wisdom of the poor and of the rich are subject to such vanities (as have been showed in the end of the former chapter, and in the beginning of this), then where is the excellency of wisdom above folly?

Answer. In two things: first, In placing of the heart. The heart of the wise is at his right hand; of the fool at his left, verse 2; secondly, In the failing of a fool's heart in his ordinary course and way, and thereby betraying himself openly to be a fool, verse 3.

Doctrine 1. There is a great difference between a wise man and a fool, in the placing and carrying of their hearts. It is not to be thought there is any observable difference in the heart of a wise man and of a

fool, for then some anatomists would have observed it; but the heart is put metonymically for the mind, judgment, and will of a man; and the right and left hand are put metaphorically. The meaning is, first, A wise man doth not aim at sinister ends in his work, Matthew 6:3; he aimeth sincerely at the glory of God, and the good of himself and others. A foolish pharisee, Christ calleth them so, Matthew 23:17,19, he doth all to be seen of men, Matthew 6:2,5,16; 2 Kings 10:16, or for some selfish end or other. Secondly, A wise man carrieth his thoughts and works with strength and dexterity. As the right hand is counted stronger than the left, so what is wrought with strength is attributed to the right hand, Psalm 118:15-16, and 98:1. Thirdly, A wise man may be said to have his heart at his right hand, in that he taketh all things in the fairest and best sense from God or man, Psalm 119:75; Matthew 1:19; on the contrary, a fool makes a sinister construction of that which is well meant from God or man, 2 Samuel 10:2-3; Ecclesiastes 8:11; Psalm 50:21; Romans 2:4-5. Fourthly, The right hand is a place of pre-eminence and blessing, Genesis 48:14,17-19; in which respect a wise man taketh ways of preferment to highest honour before the Most High, Proverbs 15:24, and 10:20-21, and 12:26; Matthew 25:33. And for carrying on their hearts in their course of life, there is great difference between the wise and the fool. The fool,

in his ordinary and daily course of life, which, in verse 3 is called his way, his heart faileth him, and faileth him so far that he expresseth and discovereth his folly openly to all that observe him. Not that Solomon here speaketh of a natural fool, that, as he walketh in the streets, discovereth to all that he is a fool by his looks and gesture; Solomon seldom or never speaketh of them in all his writings. But he speaketh of a carnal, wicked man, destitute both of spiritual wisdom, and wisdom fit for his calling; and the words may, according to the text, be translated, 'Yea also, as he that is a fool walketh in his way, his heart faileth him, and he saith to all men he is a fool', Psalm 36:1; 2 Timothy 3:9; 1 Timothy 5:24–25.

Reason 1. From the deep deceitfulness and weakness of the heart, unless the Lord dwell in it, strengthen it, keep it, and guide it, Jeremiah 17:9. God is the strength of the godly, wise man's heart,

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Psalm 73:26. But in a hypocrite, much more in an open wicked man, his heart is empty at his best; and being empty, Satan will soon repossess him, and hurry him to open offences and miscarriages, Matthew 12:44–45.

Reason 2. From the failing of the heart the way will be openly vain and foolish and wicked, text.

Use 1. To teach us not to neglect wisdom, though a poor man's wisdom be despised, and he forgotten, and an honourable man's wisdom is corrupted with some dead and stinking fly, some time or other. For though this be true, yet there is great pre-eminence in a wise man above a fool, as both these verses show. .

Use 2. For trial of a wise man and a foolish, according to the different placing of a man's heart on his right hand or left. (This to be amplified according to the estate of the present auditory.)

Use 3. To teach us not to trust in our own hearts; we are then fools, Proverbs 28:26. Our hearts are empty naturally; and empty hearts will fail us and proclaim our folly. It is good to have our hearts filled with Christ, with his Spirit, and with his grace, Ephesians 3:17; Hebrews 13:9.

Versè 4. If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

Solomon having observed, that one dead fly and one little strain of folly staineth the reputation and honour of wise men of high place, he

proceedeth in the rest of this chapter to declare what those dead flies or vanities be in particular throughout this chapter. But to prevent disloyal thoughts, which thereupon might arise in the heart or carriage of subjects towards their governors, he hedgeth in his discourse with a twofold direction and instruction of loyalty: 1. One in the beginning of his discourse, verse 4; 2. The other in the end of it, verse 20.

Parts of the verse: 1. A direction to a right and loyal carriage of a man's self in case the spirit of the ruler rise up against a man; if so, yet leave not thy place. 2. A reason of it, from the benefit of a better course; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

Doctrine 1. The rising of the spirit of a prince against a subject, doth not give leave to a subject to leave his place, but calleth him rather to lay down his spirit. The spirit of a prince is not a sudden passion,

but a habitual bent of displeasure; (for spirit is a habitual bent, Proverbs 18:14; Numbers 5:14.) His place is not meant of place of habitation chiefly, for in times of deep and bitter displeasure it is lawful to leave the country, 1 Kings 19:1-3, &c.; John 4:1,3. Nor the place of a man's office, if the office be civil, and such as a man may lay down and leave without sin against God. but detriment to himself; for if the leaving of a man's civil office may prevent the danger of his life, it were better laid down with safety than kept with displeasure and peril. But by place is meant the relation of a subject, his loyalty, 1 Samuel 24:4, and 26:11. *Place* is by the Septuagint translated τὰξίς, Job 38:12.

Reason 1. From the ground and foundation of authority and subjection between prince and people, which is, first, An ordinance of God, Romans 13:1-2; secondly, The covenant of the people confirmed by the oath of God between them, Ecclesiastes 8:2; 2 Samuel 5:3; 2 Kings 11:17. Until therefore the body of the people do find such great cause of complaint of their ruler as to have broken the fundamental articles of their covenant, the ruler's transgression of his course and duty to the subject is no cause of discharge of the subject's duty to him.

Reason 2. From the benefit and efficacy of yielding; it pacifieth great wrath; text. Yielding in soft answers, Proverbs 15:1, and in actual submission to his will, Proverbs 25:15.

Use 1. To teach us not to rise up in our spirits against rulers, if they should rise up against us. It is not lawful for us to leave our place of subjection and loyalty, which dissolveth the relation or the exercise of it. Which argueth it is not lawful for servants to run from their masters,

for therein they dissolve their relations, Genesis 16:6, &c.; 1 Peter 2:18, &c., unless there be peril of life or limb to the servant.

Question. Whether may it be lawful for a state to rise against their king or ruler?

Answer. First, Not for every injury to the state, which may stand with the safety of it; secondly, In atrocious evils they may oppose him, 1 Samuel 14:44–45, and 22:17; thirdly, Tyrants *sine Titulo* they may depose, as Athaliah, 2 Kings 11:12, 16; fourthly, Subverters of the safety of the state, they

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are first by all gentle means to reduce and heal. If all other remedies be hopeless, they may *Curare, ne quid republica detrimenti capiat*.

Use 2. To quiet and subject our hearts to a holy yielding unto God in all afflictions, Psalm 119:75; 1 Samuel 3:18; 2 Kings 20:19.

Verse 5. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler.

Verse 6. Folly is set in great dignity and the rich set in low place.

Verse 7. I have seen servants upon horses and princes walking as servants upon the earth.

In these verses Solomon noteth the first of those dead flies which putrify the reputation and wisdom of princes, and that is the misemployment of their favours and honours. Where,

First, The men advanced are: 1. Fools, yea, folly itself; 2. Poor men, in opposition to rich; 3. Servants. Those debased are, 1. Wise, in opposition to fools; 2. Rich not only in outward estate, but in parts and gifts fit for government; 3. Princes.

Secondly, The misemployment or misplacing is, 1. Folly in great dignity, rich in low place; 2. Princes walking as servants, servants riding on horseback like princes.

Thirdly, The cause of this; the face or countenance of the prince to the one, against the other.

Fourthly, The vanity of it; it is, 1. An error; 2. An evil error.

Doctrine 1. It is an error, and an evil error, that proceedeth from the face of a ruler, the advancement of mean and weak men, and the debasement

of able and noble persons. Doeg an Edomite advanced, 1 Samuel 22:9; Haman an Amalekite, Esther 3:1.

Reason of this error: first, Fellowship of princes in their education with vain persons, 1 Kings 12:8. It was a great error in Solomon to make no better choice of his son's school-fellows and play-fellows; secondly, Princes' indulgent respect to servants brought up under them, Proverbs 29:21; thirdly, The servitude of some princes to their passions and lusts, and the serviceableness of some base men to princes herein; so Doeg to Saul's cruelty and enmity against David and the priests, 1 Samuel 22:9, &c.

Reason of the evil of the error: first, It is uncomely, Proverbs 19:10, and 26:1; as if the weak

and uncomely members of the body should be set in highest place, open to view. Secondly, It is burdensome to the whole estate of a commonwealth, the rule of a servant, Proverbs 30:21-22.

Reason of the proceeding of this error from the face of the ruler; from the efficacy of the king's face in the advancement or debasement of persons about him. It is not the desert of an unworthy person that honoureth him, but only the king's countenance, Proverbs 16:15.

Use 1. To teach men to prevent this error by choosing for their children good companions, as much as may be, at school, at play.

Use 2. To teach our people here, whose government is elective, to make choice of men of greatest worth for wisdom, for sufficiency, for birth.

Use 3. To look at it as more safe for the commonwealth to put the eminency of honour and power rather in the hand of the magistracy than in the commonalty.

Use 4. To teach us to prefer God and his ways above ourselves and our wills. He is the prince of princes, our wisdom is folly.

Verse 8. *Be that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge a serpent shall bite him.*

Verse 9. *Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.*

Verse 10. *If the iron be blunt and he do not whet the edge then must be put to more strength.*

In these verses Solomon reckoneth up in pithy and proverbial speeches and parables other dead flies found in princes and statesmen, though otherwise in reputation for their wisdom and honour. The former verses declared the first dead fly, the misemployment of princes' favours and honours, verse 8–10. The second is the digging of a pit for innocent and well deserving men to fall into, an unusual practice in statesmen, but dangerous; otherwise digging of a pit for a wicked guilty man to fall into is safe, 1 Kings 2:36–46. The third is breaking a hedge—that is, some defence set about church or commonwealth, whether counsel, laws, or guard of military men, verse 8. Fourthly, Removing stones—that is, massy and unwieldy persons, as Zechariah 12:3. Fifthly, Cleaving of wood—that is, making division between persons firmly and closely compacted,

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verse 9. Sixthly, Blunt affronts put upon people by a weak arm; it is as striking with blunt iron, without much strength put to, verse 10. To help this he directeth to the use of wisdom, which is profitable to direct, to set an edge upon business, verse 10.

Doctrine 1. The digging of a pit, the breaking of a hedge, the removing of stones, the cleaving of wood, and blunt affronts upon the people by a weak arm, are all of them dead flies usually found in statesmen, but always dangerous.

The digging of a pit, to wit, for an innocent or well-deserving man to fall into, Psalm 7:15. So Saul plotted against David, 1 Samuel 18:17, but fell into that pit himself, 1 Samuel 31:3,6. So Haman prepared a gallows for Mordecai, but was hanged on it himself, Esther 7:9–10.

The breaking of a hedge is the violating of some defence set for the guard or safety of a people or state, as a hedge is set about a pasture of cattle. Such a hedge, dangerous to be broken, are Laws and liberties, Jeremiah 34:11–17; counsellors and parliaments, 1 Kings 12:13; and faithful and valiant guard of military men, 1 Samuel 18:13, and 19:1.

Removing of stones, that is, of massy and unwieldy persons, 1 Samuel 19:11, and 18:13; Proverbs 26:27; Zechariah 12:3.

Cleaving of wood, making divisions between persons firmly and closely compacted, may soon endanger him that doth it.

Blunt iron, the edge not whetted, requireth more strength; and if strength be wanting, the blunt stroke or affront is dangerous, 1 Kings 12:13–14.

Reason 1. Of their falling into a pit that dig it, from God's righteousness and wisdom to take the wily in their own craftiness, Job 5:12–13; Proverbs 3:29.

Reason 2. Of a serpent's biting them that break the hedge, from God's establishment of ancient bounds, Proverbs 23:10–11, and from the old serpent's power when men go out of their calling, as in our callings angels guard us, Psalm 91:11–12.

Reason 3. Of hurt by removing stones; it is a tempting of God to presume beyond our strength.

Reason 4. Of hurt by cleaving wood, from God's hatred of sowing discord, Proverbs 4:16, 19.

Reason 5. Of hurt by blunt affronts, from God's wrathful resistance of the proud, Job 40:11–12.

Use 1. To learn statesmen wisdom to direct all their affairs.

Verse 10. But wisdom is profitable to direct.

Verse 11. Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babler is no better.

But wisdom is profitable or excellent to direct; if the serpent do bite without enchantment, there is no profit to the master of the tongue. In the former verse Solomon had observed sundry vanities, as it were indeed flies, found in men of reputation for wisdom and honour; and here, before he proceeds to declare any more of these dead flies, he interfereth a remedy to prevent such miscarriages, which is wisdom.

But wisdom, saith he, is profitable to direct as an antidote against all the former dead flies; which he proveth, 1. By the unprofitableness of words, when hurt is done. If the serpent bite without enchantment, in vain are all great words, sweet words, afterwards, verse 11. 2. By the effect of wisdom, and the words thereof. The words of a wise man are grace, verse 12; but the lips of a fool, first, They swallow up the speaker, verse 12. Secondly, They breathe, 1. In the beginning foolishness; 2. In the end mischievous madness, verse 13. Thirdly, They multiply many matters; for so the word signifieth many projects, and those such as leave men doubtful and in suspense what will be the end or issue of all, verse 14. Fourthly, They weary themselves and one another in their undue courses and projects. And this amplified by the cause thereof, their ignorance of the

principles or highway road, broad way of government, expressed in a proverbial speech, because he knoweth not, that is, none of them knoweth the way to the city, verse 16.

The 11th verse I turn, If the serpent bite without enchantment, there is no profit to the master of the tongue; for so the words properly signify, and are so translated, Ecclesiastes 2:11. There is no profit, and the master of the tongue is a man skilful in speech, able and powerful in speech; as the master of dreams, Genesis 37:19, is a man skilful in dreams; a master of wing, Proverbs 1:17, is skilful

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in flying; a master of horns, Daniel 8:6, is powerful in his horns. And so Mr Perkins translateth this verse in his discourse of witchcraft, chapter 4, section 1.

Doctrine. Wisdom is profitable to direct to the right avoidance of all such dead flies as are usually found dangerous in statesmen of reputation. Or, wisdom is of excellent use, or profitable, &c.; for the word signifieth excellency as well as profit, and so it is translated, Ecclesiastes 7:12. Hence Solomon prayed for this gift of all other, as most requisite for government, 1 Kings 3:9.

Reason 1. Wisdom discerneth and chooseth the right end of government, which is, the punishment of evil-doers, the praise of the good, Romans 13:4; 1 Timothy 2:2. I say discerneth and chooseth; for wisdom is not in the head only, as discerning, but in the heart, as choosing the best good; else he that discerneth good, but chooseth it not, is still a fool.

Reason 2. Wisdom discerneth and chooseth the best means tending and leading to those ends; as, 1. Righteous laws, Deuteronomy 4:6,8; 2. Wise counsellors, 1 Kings 12:6; 3. Just judges, 2 Chronicles 19:5-7; Psalm 82:2,5; 4. Valiant soldiers, 1 Samuel 16:18; 1 Chronicles 12:8; 1 Samuel 14:52; 5. Diligent improvement, first, Of earth by husbandry, Ecclesiastes 5:9; Proverbs 14:4; secondly, Of sea by merchandise, 1 Kings 10:22-23, 28-29; both which are wrapped up in the cunning artificer or artist, Isaiah 3:3.

Reason 3. Wisdom considereth the estate of the people, what it will willingly bear, and what it is able to bear, 1 Kings 12:7; Nehemiah 5:18.

Reason 4. Wisdom deriveth all its light and strength from the prince of wisdom, who is wisdom itself, the wisdom of the Father, Proverbs 8:12,15, and so denieth itself, Proverbs 3:5-7.

Use 1. To teach magistrates to lay aside all false guides in steering the course of government. It is not wit that is profitable to direct, Ecclesiastes 4:13, but wisdom; nor favour to favourites unfit for government, Ecclesiastes 10:6–7; nor strength, Ecclesiastes 9:16.

Use 2. To teach magistrates to improve their wisdom in all the former particulars mentioned in the reasons.

Doctrine. As a serpent biting without enchantment cannot afterwards be healed with skilful words, so neither can a mischief befallen a prince or people for want of wisdom be afterwards healed by great or sweet words. The Scripture speaketh of some serpents which will not be charmed, Psalm 58:4, 5; Jeremiah 8:17; but it implieth that some may be and are charmed by enchanters, joining societies cunningly with the devil, as the phrase is, Psalm 58:5, and when they are not charmed, then they sting without interruption and without remedy many times. So, when a prince hath not used wisdom to direct his affairs, he may be stung with a mortal mischief to himself and the state, and then skilful words will do no good. Rehoboam neglecting to charm the people's discontent beforehand, 1 Kings 12:13–19, afterwards in vain came Adoram, what words soever he gave them to gather up tribute, verse 18, yea, in vain were Abijam's savoury words afterwards, 2 Chronicles 13:4–13.

Reason. From the strong and venomous and malignant inflammation which harsh and foolish words may kindle in an understanding and free people. It was a malignant inflammation which brake forth from the people incensed, when they rejected the seed of David, 1 Kings 12:16.

Use 1. To observe the power of charmers by their covenant with Satan, who hath power over serpents, and therefore they are called the power of the enemy, Luke 10:19. Yet this power is limited; he cannot heal after biting, at least could not then, though his commission may be enlarged since; neither can he charm some serpents, Psalm 58:5; Jeremiah 8:17. How much less can he charm the seed of the woman without special commission, and when he doth bite them, it is but the heel. Genesis 3:15.

Use 2. To show us the mighty virtue and efficacy of wisdom, that can charm malignant and venomous minds.

Verse 12. *The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.*

Verse 13. *The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.*

Verse 14. A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be: and what shall be after him, who can tell him?

 III

Verse 15. The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

Coherence, see in verse 10. These words (the words of the wise man in grace) are a reason of what he said, verse 10, that wisdom is profitable to direct, taken from the grace of a wise man's words, which maketh the argument of force, howsoever grace be taken.

Doctrine 1. The words of the wise (even of the wise statesmen) are grace. Of statesmen Solomon here speaketh, from the beginning of this chapter to the end; and he speaketh of such wisdom as is profitable to direct in state affairs, verse 10. Their words may be said to be grace, first, As flowing from the grace and favour of God, Psalm 45:2. Secondly, As ministering grace to the people, Ephesians 4:29; 1 Kings 8:55–61; 1 Chronicles 29:18; at least expressing the grace and favour of God, and the prince's favour and grace to them, Psalm 122:6–9; Esther 10:3; seeking their wealth, speaking peace. Thirdly, As finding acceptance with the people, Proverbs 10:32; 2 Samuel 3:59; Esther 10:3; 'accepted of the multitude of his brethren'.

Doctrine 2. The words of fools, especially of foolish statesmen, the beginning of them is foolishness, the end of them is madness, pernicious, and mischievous to themselves and others. And their ways are variable and of doubtful event, and wearisome even to themselves and all men, Esther 3:8–9. Haman began his speech with a foolish complaint against better men than himself, accusing them of that for a vice which was a virtue (to live a separate course of life from the vain world, Numbers 23:9), but the end of his speech was pernicious and mischievous madness to the Jews, Esther 3:9, and to himself. It swallowed up himself, Esther 7:4–6, &c.; 1 Kings 12:14, it was a foolish beginning to acknowledge his father's rigour, but the end of his speech was mischievous madness to threaten more rigour. Variable in their projects, Jeremiah 2:23, 36–37; wearisome ways, Habakkuk 2:13; Isaiah 47:13, and 57:9–10.

Reason 1. From the ignorance of such persons (foolish statesmen) of the principles of civil government, implied in that proverbial speech, that they know not the way to the city, which is wont to be a broad roadway, but these discern it not, like men that have lost their way, Psalm 107:4, 40.

Reason 2. From God's rejection of them and their ways, Psalm 107:40; Jeremiah 2:37.

Use 1. To teach magistrates to speak words of grace.

Use 2. To show the folly and danger of foolish statesmen.

Verse 16. *Woe to thee O land when thy king is a child and thy princes eat in the morning!*

Verse 17. *Blessed art thou, O land when thy king is the son of nobles and thy princes eat in due season for strength and not for drunkenness!*

Verse 18. *By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.*

Verse 19. *A feast is made for laughter and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things.*

In these words, over and above all the former, Solomon observeth two other vanities incident to statesmen, viz., childishness and intemperancy, or epicurism; which he amplifieth, first, By the adjunct, woeful estate of a land, where so it is, verse 16; secondly, By the contrary blessed estate of such a land whose king is the son of nobles, and princes eat in due season, for strength, not for excess, verse 17; thirdly, By the effects; which are, 1. Remissness in government, called here much slothfulness and idleness of hands, and (that which easily floweth from thence) the decay of the state of the commonwealth, expressed under the comparison of the decay of the house, verse 18; 2. Prodigal expense of money, which groweth from their intemperancy in feasts, as the former did from childishness of government, verse 19.

Doctrine. It is a woeful estate of a country or commonwealth where the king is childish and the princes epicures, or intemperate. On the contrary, the state is blessed where the king is noble, and the princes temperate.

The word translated woe doth signify an island, and because islands were at first more desolate, and less inhabited than the continent, therefore they called the doleful fowls that lodged in that island by the name of islands; such fowls as do not affect the company of men nor beasts, as screech-owls, and bitterns, and ostriches, &c., and so the word cometh to signify woeful or woe, such a kind of woe as accompanieth

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desolate islands—desolation itself; Woe to thee, O land, whose king is childish, and whose princes are riotous, they shall be as a desolate island, an habitation for screech-owls and every doleful bird.

A child, not so much in years, for Solomon himself was very young when he came to the crown; David saith of him, He was young and tender, 1 Chronicles 29:1. Joash was but seven years old when he began to reign, yet he ruled well all the days of his youth, from the good counsel of his uncle Jehoiada, 2 Chronicles 24:1. Uzziah was but sixteen years old, yet he reigned well in his young time, by the good counsel of Zechariah, 2 Chronicles 26:3–5. Josiah was but eight years old, and he surpassed them all, 2 Chronicles 34:1. Only Manasseh, of all the young kings, beginning to reign at twelve years, he did evil in his youth, 2 Chronicles 33:1.

A child therefore is rather meant childish, 1. In understanding, 1 Corinthians 14:20; 2. In affection and disposition; first, Cleaving to young counsellors, 1 Kings 12:8; secondly, Soon wavering in religion, Ephesians 4:14; thirdly, Led by sense and sensible objects, more than by depth of judgment and reason; led by passions and lusts of youth, pastimes and recreations, but careless of matters of importance. Thus Rehoboam is said to be young and tender in heart, when he was above forty-one years old, 1 Kings 14:21, with 2 Chronicles 13:7. And so indeed Solomon expresseth this childishness in slothfulness and remissness of government, verse 18, as by eating in the morning he expresseth luxurious feasting, verse 19.

Whose princes eat in the morning, which implieth both the unseasonableness of their eating, especially their feasting then, as verse 19, expoundeth it of the morning, being the principal time of judgment, Jeremiah 21:12. And the excess and riot of their eating, to wit, for gluttony and drunkenness, rather than for strength, as appeareth by the opposition of good princes' diet, verse 17.

Reason 1. From the danger of childish government to a state, as also of riotous government. Which dangers be, 1. Remissness of government, or slothfulness, whence the decay of all good in a commonwealth, as in a house that is neglected; as decay of justice, trading, military power, and skill,

honour and reputation with foreign princes and states; and, which is worst of all, decay in religion, and purity thereof; whence also dropping

in of contentious corruptions into all sorts. 2. Prodigious expense of the treasure of the state in feasting and banqueting, in masks and revels, where money must answer all; and that not a purseful, or pocketful, or bagful, or chestful, but a whole king's treasury; and when that faileth, then illegal exactions of the subjects' estates.

The son of nobles; not so much of noble ancestors, for most kings are such, and yet their kingdoms not always blessed; yea, sometimes they that are raised from low estates, as David from following the sheep, may be blessed princes, and the land blessed in them. But a son of nobles is a noble son, a man of noble spirit, or heroes, for from the Hebrew word *heroe* it seems to be derived, are so called of whiteness, not so much for wearing white garments, as being bright and glorious, *Viri illustres, et clarissimi*, opposed to dark or obscure men, Proverbs 22:29.

A man of a noble spirit, first, *Notabilis* well known and approved for his virtues, Deuteronomy 1:13. Secondly, Of a public spirit; regardeth public good ends more than private self ends, Psalm 137:6. Thirdly, Affecteth rather to be loved than feared, and yet to be feared too with due reverence; servile natures are imperious and cruel—*aut servit humiliter, aut superbe dominatur*; noble spirits, as of lions, will *parcere subjectis*, be moderate in punishments, merciful to suppliants. Fourthly, Regardeth honour above life, much more before money, preferring the fifth commandment above the sixth, much more above the eighth.

Eat in due season: 1. For time, not in the morning; 2. For measure, not for excess in gluttony and drunkenness, but sparingly.

But for strength, 1. Of body and mind; 2. Of fitness to the duties of their place.

Reason of the blessedness of the state by such: Vigilancy, and diligent attention of such to state affairs; not suffering decays in the good of the state, nor droppings in of the mischievous ruinous evils; secondly, Provident frugality in preserving the treasure of the state, 2 Chronicles 9:27; 1 Kings 10:21.

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Use 1. To teach us what to pray for in behalf of our native country: 1. What evils to be avoided; 2. What blessings to be desired.

Use 2. To teach us what manner of magistrates are to be chosen in our little commonwealth, and how they are to walk. It is fellowship with Christ, and living by faith in him, that girdeth us up to our callings; sitting loose from the head breedeth a paralytic distemper in the body.

Use 3. To teach all men a right use of meats and drinks; large breakfasts break the necks of our strength and of our callings. The end of feasts should be for strength, and so moderate as our money may answer.

Use 4. To teach householders to beware of slothfulness and ill husbandry; it will ruin our houses, for from thence is the comparison here fetched;

Use 5. To teach us a wise use of money; to be responsible to all our expenses.

Verse 20. *Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.*

Solomon having declared many vanities, like dead flies, found in princes and statesmen, he now directeth wise subjects to some such Christian duties as are fit to be practised at all times, but most needful and seasonable to be attended to in evil and dangerous times, in this and the whole context of the next chapter. As, first, To beware of cursing princes and statesmen, however corrupt their government be, verse 20; secondly, To bestow our talents liberally, whilst time serveth, before evil come upon the earth, chapter 11:1–2, &c.; thirdly, To be diligent in our callings early and late, verse 4–6.

Parts, two: first, A commandment forbidding to curse the king, or rich and great men, his princes and officers. And this prohibition amplified by the strictness of it, forbidding the cursing of them where it might be supposed to be done with greatest secrecy and safety: not the king in thy thought, the rich in thy bed-chamber. Secondly, A reason, from the danger of discovery of it by speedy and unlikely means; for the birds of the air (the master of wings) will declare the word or matter.

Doctrine. Though the king should be childish, and princes intemperate and slothful, and both of them

suffer the state to fall to decay, yet it is neither lawful nor safe for private men to revile or curse either of them, no, not in the greatest, Exodus 22:28, where the prohibition is general, without restraint to good magistrates.

For opening of the point to be shown: first, How far a private subject may go in such a case; secondly, 'How far he may not go. A private subject may, first, Conceive of a king as he seeth him plainly to be, and so of other statesmen; and accordingly, as his calling requireth it, he may reprove them all to their faces, 2 Samuel 12:9; 1 Samuel 13:13–14; 1 Kings 18:18,

and 21:20; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Ezekiel 21:25. This is not to vilify or curse them, but to restore and heal them, or at least to leave them without excuse. Secondly, He may complain of their wickedness to God, and confess it, Daniel 9:8. Thirdly, He may speak of it to subjects so far as to prevent the corrupting of them by the authority or example of their governors, 2 Kings 6:32; Hosea 5:11, and 7:3,5. Public persons and the whole people may resist them in evil, 2 Chronicles 26:17, 18; 1 Samuel 14:44-45; but none may, first, Despise their callings or governments, which are of God, Jude 8; secondly, They may not revile them nor make them worse than they be; חקלל is to make light, as metals by clipping and washing; 2 Samuel 16:7-8, David was no son of Belial, nor bloody to the house of Saul, though so to Uriah; thirdly, Imprecate or wish evil to them, Matthew 5:44, *à fortiori*.

Objection. Did not Paul revile Ananias? Acts 23:3.

Answer. He knew him to be a judge, verse 2—sittest thou to judgment? &c.—though he knew him not to be the high priest. But he did not revile him, but reprov'd him gravely for his hypocrisy—oh whited wall!—and iniquity, commanding him to be smitten against law, and prophesied his destruction. Nor doth he say he would not have said so much to him if he had known him to be the high priest (for Jeremiah did say so much to Pashur, Jeremiah 20:1-6), though the high priesthood was then accomplished in Christ; yet, while the temple stood, the shadows were to be buried with honour, but this was no dishonour to his place, to reprove him justly.

Reason 1. They are by their place fathers of the country, Isaiah 49:23, and fathers, though wicked,

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are not to be despised nor cursed, Exodus 21:17; Proverbs 30:17.

Reason 2. They bear the name and place and image of God's sovereignty and authority, Exodus 22:28; Psalm 82:6.

Reason 3. They are heads of the whole body of the state, 1 Samuel 15:17, and so in cursing them we curse ourselves and the whole state.

Reason 4. From the danger which will redound to ourselves by discovery of our words. Princes have long ears and quick-sighted eyes. Birds of the air are put hyperbolically for unlikely means, not so fitly expounded angels; for we do not read of their ministry in that kind, though a spirit of prophecy hath done as much, 2 Kings 6:11-12; nor devils, though they be called fowls of the air, Matthew 13:4,19. But if they had a

commission so to do, it would disturb all states. But the saying is verified, first, Sometimes in birds occasionally discovering secrets, as the swallows revealed Besrus's murder of his father; who, as he sat by the fire with his neighbours, the swallows chirping and singing above in the chimney, he proked them down and killed them; and when they that sat by him found fault with him for it, as an unnatural cruelty, he excused himself, that the burden of their song was a burden to him, which was, Besrus hath slain his father; whence he being apprehended and brought before the magistrates, confessed the murder and was executed. So *Ibici Grues* discovered the murder of the poet Ibicus; whence the proverb *Ibici Grues*. Secondly, Sometimes in words flying like winged fowls, flying in the mouths of idle talkers or indiscreet speakers, of spies or promoters, and of faithful subjects, Esther 2:21–23.

Use 1. To observe the divine authority of God's word, and the spiritual sovereignty thereof, putting a law upon our very thoughts, which no law of man can do, 2 Corinthians 10:4.

Use 2. To teach magistrates to be the more careful of preserving God's honour, since he is careful of preserving theirs, even in the secret closets of their subjects. What a fearful ingratitude were it in a prince to curse and swear and blaspheme the name of God, who would have them not cursed, no, not in secret.

Use 3. To teach us to observe God's care of our

safety, who doth prevent us with such wary cautions, lest we fall into danger unexpectedly. We therefore ought to be the more regardful of the safety of his honour, and of his ordinances.

Use 4. To take up this lesson and counsel of Solomon, not to meddle out of our callings in state matters to the provocation of princes; yea, to bridle our tongues, though princes be not such public blessings as were to be wished. How much more ought we to be far off from reviling or vilifying good magistrates? God took it ill at Miriam's hand and Aaron's, Numbers 12:1–2, 8–9, and worse at the hands of Korah and his company, Numbers 16:3–33.

CHAPTER XI.

Verse 1. *Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.*

Verse 2. *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.*

Verse 3. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

Coherence, see above in chapter 10:20. Solomon having showed sundry several vanities, which, like dead flies, are found in statesmen, he proceedeth to direct his wise subjects to some such Christian duties as are requisite at all times, but especially in such dangerous times as the vanity of great men are wont to bring upon a state, from chapter 10:20, to the end of the eighth discourse, of the vanity of the estate of the creatures, till we come to conclude the whole book; as, first, To beware of cursing princes and statesmen, how corrupt soever their government be, the better to provide for our own safety, chapter 10:20. Secondly, To be the more liberal to pious and charitable uses, in regard of the troubles coming upon the land, where such misgovernment is found, chapter 11:1–3. Thirdly, To be the more diligent and fruitful in the duties of our calling, verse 4–6. Fourthly, To break off a course of sin, and to hasten repentance and turning unto God, howsoever the times be, chapter 12:7–8; whereupon Solomon concludeth the whole book, chapter 12:9–14. The text is an exhortation to liberality or beneficence—cast

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thy bread, give a portion, &c., which is amplified by a twofold state of the subject: first, By the fleeting estate of the subject, like waters, verse 2; secondly, By the variety of subjects, persons, or multitude of them, verses 7–8; and confirmed by four motives: first, From the recompense thereof at last—in fullness of days thou shalt find it, verse 1. Secondly, From the uncertainty of future calamities threatening the state—for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the country, verse 2. Thirdly, From the example of the clouds, which, when they are full, empty themselves upon the earth, verse 3. Fourthly, From the certainty of the rest or abode of a benefit where it is bestowed, set forth by the similitude of a tree lying where it falleth, verse 3.

Doctrine 1. When dangerous times hang over the public state, it is a point of holy wisdom to be liberal and bountiful to charitable and pious uses, especially there, where there is least hope of recompense in man's eye. Bread cast upon the face of the waters is utterly lost in man's reason; it will either sink or swim away. Yet cast thy bread there, especially in dangerous times, when thou knowest not what evils are coming upon the land. There be six or seven properties of alms-deeds, or other good

offices of Christian love and bounty, which Solomon comprehendeth, even all of them, in these words: first, To be doing good readily and roundly, not so as if a gift or good work stuck in a man's fingers, implied in the word *cast*; not give only, or draw out, but cast. God loveth a cheerful giver, 2 Corinthians 9:7. Secondly, To do it usefully and helpfully; cast *thy* bread, not stones, nor scorpions, nor scraps, nor refuse, but such things as may do true good, may be a staff and support to others, as bread. Bread (in Matthew 5:11) is put for all profitable outward things. Thirdly, To do it justly, of a man's own, not others'; not to rob one to succour another: give thy bread, Proverbs 5:16–17; Isaiah 61:8. Pay debts first, give after. Fourthly, To do it freely, without hope of recompense from them on whom you cast your bread. Bread cast on water will either sink or swim away, Luke 14:13–14. By waters is not here meant *locus irriguus*, moist and fruitful ground, as Isaiah 32:20; for there it is not said, Besides all waters—where such places are fruitful—but, Upon the face of the waters. Nor is here meant watery faces, weeping

for want, though that be part of the meaning. Fifthly, To do it sincerely, without aim of vainglory. This bread thus cast upon the face of the waters stayeth not to be seen of men, but either sinketh or swimmeth away. Bread given, as the pharisees did, for vainglory, is cast rather upon pillars of marble or of brass rather than upon fleeting waters. Sixthly, To do it frequently and often, not rarely and to a few: 'Give a portion to seven, and also to eight', verse 2. Seven put for many, 1 Samuel 2:5; Micah 5:5. A good man disperseth his beneficence—to wit, to many, Psalm 112:9. The larger the field is wherein seed is scattered, the more hope of a plentiful harvest. Seventhly, To do it wisely and discreetly. 'Give a portion to seven, and also to eight', implieth, 1. Not all to others, leaving none for home, but give a part; 2. Not all to some, none to others, but a part to seven, and also to eight; 3. Not a pittance, but a portion—such a proportion as whereon a poor man may work and occupy, to do some good withal, as with a portion.

Reason 1. From the recompense; for in multitude of days thou shalt find it, text—which implieth, First, Length of days, promised to men fruitful this way, which often holdeth in proper speech, Psalm 34:12,14. Do good, and it is a way to see good days long, Daniel 4:27. Liberal men seldom die young. Abraham lived long, Genesis 25:7–8; Psalm 41:2. Secondly, If they should die sooner, their children will find it, Psalm 37:25–26. Thirdly, Sometimes themselves find speedy recompense in the

same kind, 1 Kings 17:13–16. Fourthly, Sometimes they find it with usury, or advantage in spiritual and eternal grace and glory, Luke 16:10, &c.; Galatians 6:6–9; 1 Timothy 6:18–19; 2 Timothy 1:16, &c.

Reason 2. From the uncertainty of future calamities, or rather certainty of their coming, but uncertainty in what kind, text, verse 2. And therefore, first, It is good to be giving whilst we have it, lest all be swept away in a deluge of public calamity; secondly, It is wisdom by this means to prolong tranquillity, Daniel 4:27; thirdly, It is seasonable to prepare against a storm, Psalm 41:1,3.

Reason 3. From the example of the clouds, which, being full of water, pour down rain, text, verse 3, and that both upon earth and sea. Not like rich men who, the more rich they grow, grow the more niggardly,

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and give more sparingly than the poorer sort. Yea, the clouds, by pouring out rain regain it again both from the sea and earth, by ascending vapours; and so do liberal men gain by bounty, Proverbs 11:25.

Reason 4. From the uncertainty of the rest of a benefit where it is bestowed, as a tree resteth where it falleth, text, verse 3. Benefit will be reaped from thence to thee, though they should not be the better for it, Isaiah 49:4–5; Psalm 35:13; how much more when they do reap benefit by our beneficence, Job 29:13, and 31:20.

Use 1. To exhort to unwearied and abundant fruitfulness in all these kinds, by all these reasons, as so many motives, Proverbs 19:17; Luke 6:38.

Verse 4. *He that observeth the wind, shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds, shall not reap.*

Verse 5. *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*

Verse 6. *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

Solomon, in regard of the dangers of the times, when kings are childish and princes humorous, exhorted to liberality in verse 1–3, which was the second duty he inferred upon that occasion. In these words he presseth still the same, but with an enlargement unto all faithfulness and diligence

in any duty of a man's calling, especially in such dangerous times; which is a third improvement of such evil times. To set forward this duty, he removeth a doubt which might hinder a man from beneficence and fruitfulness in his course and calling. The doubt is taken either from the fear of some danger or dangers that might befall a man in so doing, which he expresth under a proverbial comparison, taken from husbandmen, who, for fear of foul weather, do sometimes neglect some duty of husbandry, in seed-time or harvest, verse 4. Or else from some difficulty which sometimes accompany Christian and holy and great undertakings of duty, especially such duties as may help forward reformation in such times.

To the former he answereth, verse 4, that such

fears of damage and danger are more dangerous than the hurt we fear; for they will prevent the performance of all good duties, and the recompense of that performance; as a husbandman that observeth the wind shall never sow, and he that observeth the clouds shall never reap, verse 4.

To the latter he answereth by opposing the strange and secret assistance and success and deliverance which God giveth unto men in the duties of their calling. Which he amplifieth by a comparison from the like secret assistance and deliverance which God giveth to the child fashioned in the womb, both in the framing of his spirit, or soul, and in the setting and ordering of his bones; which is a strange, yet ordinary secret in nature, like unto which all the works which a man undertaketh in his calling are fashioned and wrought of God, who worketh all, verse 5. And thus it cometh to pass when God is pleased to put to his helping hand to us in the works of our calling, otherwise nothing prospereth in our hand.

From both which Solomon inferreth an exhortation to diligence and fruitfulness in our calling, directly contrary to the former doubts and difficulties. The objector propounded doubts and difficulties, and thereupon neglected to sow. But Solomon inferreth a contrary conclusion; therefore to sow more abundantly and diligently. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thy hand rest, or cease. Reason whereof he giveth from the uncertainty of the event or issue, reserved of God to this or that duty or work: 'For thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that; or whether both shall be alike good', verse 6.

Doctrine. He that shall be discouraged from beneficence in his course, and from faithfulness in his calling, by doubts and fears of uncertain dangers and damages, shall never do good in this world, nor receive good in the world that is to come.

He that observeth the wind, that is, so observeth it as to forbear sowing,
Shall never sow, that is, never do good in this life, which is a time of
sowing.

He that observeth the clouds, which are as uncertain signs of bad
weather as the wind,

He shall never reap, to wit, any recompense of his work in the other
world, which is the harvest

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time chiefly, Matthew 13:39, though there is also a harvest-time of
reaping, even in this world, Proverbs 11:31. As if a man shall be loath to
cast his bread upon the waters for fear of sickness, old age, store of children
growing on, the unsettledness of the times, &c. Such a one shall both
lose his seed, his good work, and his harvest of reward from God. As the
husbandman, that keepeth his corn in his garner or barn, for fear of
sowing in doubtful weather, shall both lose his crop, and, in time, vermin
and other casualty will consume his grain in his barn.

Reason 1. From the uncertainty of the events of all endeavours in an
ordinary course, text, verse 6; Acts 20:22; God so providing that the godly
should live by faith, and the wicked should either, first, Grow unprofitable
in their talents, because God is a hard master, Matthew 25:24; secondly,
Grow hardened, either in pride, if they prosper, Amos 6:13; Habakkuk
1:16; or in discontent, if they be crossed, Isaiah 8:21.

Reason 2. From the sorrow and afflictions that God hath annexed to
all the labours of our calling, Genesis 3:19.

Reason 3. From Satan's readiness and watchfulness to stir up and aggravate
dangers and discouragements to any goodness, Revelation 12:4.

Reason 4. From the trials which God puts upon us, by causing many
dangers and evils to hover over us, though not to bring them upon us,
but to try our obedience. So the people in the wilderness feared thirst
and famine and the Anakims, but it was only to try their obedience; for
God was ever ready with supply, Deuteronomy 8:2.

Reason 5. From our own faithless and sluggish hearts, which are ready
to imagine fears of evil where none be, Proverbs 26:13. Lions are as much
afraid of streets, as men of deserts.

Use 1. To teach us wisely to consider what good duties God requireth
of us in our Christian course and calling, and set upon it without fear
or forlorn discouragement. Every man in his place, the magistrate,
Nehemiah 6:9, 11; the minister, Acts 20:22–24; Luke 13:31–32; yea, the

wife, 1 Peter 3:6; yea, children and servants, fear not turning to God for fear of carnal parents, master, fellows, &c.

Question. But may not a man for fear of danger hold off his hand from some duty in some cases?

Answer. Yes, in case two things concur: first, The dangers be certain, not as winds and clouds, which may as well blow over as bring foul weather; secondly, The dangers be of greater damage than the duty can be of use to myself and others.

Thus David spared Joab, 2 Samuel 3:39; and the Jews forbore the building of the temple, Ezra 4:23, 24. Otherwise fear not their fears, 1 Peter 3:14; Proverbs 29:25; Luke 12:4-5.

Use 2. To look at all good duties, as sowing of seed, Galatians 6:7-8. As therefore a man would make choice of precious seed, so do every work in the best manner; let sacrifices be of the fattest, Genesis 4:3-4.

Use 3. To expect a harvest, a reaping-time according to our seed, Galatians 6:7-10.

Verse 5. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all, &c.

In these words Solomon exhorteth to fruitfulness in good duties, the duties of our calling, especially those that are most behoveful in ill times, by removing the impediments, which are three: first, From the hazard and danger, yet uncertain danger, that may befall ourselves, of which was spoken in verse 4. Secondly, From the difficulty which may be in sundry duties needful to be performed in ill times, especially in case a man's calling require him to seek reformation of public evils, verse 5; which he removeth by the unknown help and success that God will cast in and afford such hard attempts, which exceed the skill and strength of man. This he setteth forth by the like help of God, ordinarily put forth, in producing two great works, both of them far exceeding the strength and skill of man: first, As thou knowest not the way of the spirit, to wit, of its conveyance into the child bred in the womb, and its work there; secondly, As thou knowest not the way of the bones in the womb of her that is with child; so thou knowest not the work of God which worketh all, verse 5. Thirdly, From the uncertainty of prosperous or good success; from whence Solomon gathereth rather a motive to

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continual fruitfulness in good duties upon all opportunities: verse 6, 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper', &c. The expression is an allegory taken from husbandry; sow in all seasons, morning, evening, in winter, in the spring, for thou knowest not whether seed-time shall prosper, &c.

Doctrine 1. As is the way of the spirit, and of the bones of the woman with child, so is the way of God in working our works for us, secret and hidden from us; yet, when he pleaseth, carries them on effectually. The way of the spirit is the way of entrance of it into the infant conceived in the womb. To beget a soul is beyond the skill or strength of the parents, yea, or to frame the body in the womb; yea, we know not how God worketh it: whether, first, By creation of nothing. If so, whether God maketh it pure; then how cometh it to be defiled? the body being without sin, as a carcase after death, cannot defile the soul with sin. If impure; then how is not God the author of sin. Secondly, By propagation; if so, then it is made either of the whole soul of the parents, and then the parents would die; or of part of the soul, and then the soul were partable or dividable, and the soul of the parents would be maimed; or of the seed of the soul, but it hath no extremit, as having no superfluity of nourishment. Thirdly, By transfusion, as one candle transfuseth the like candle-light into prepared matter; if so, then why do not acts of generation often speed in couples most suitable? and why are the souls of children so often unlike to parents?

Fourthly, By efformation, as the potter formeth a vessel out of clay, which, of all the rest, is most probable—to wit, that God formeth the soul, though not of nothing, which is properly creation, but of pre-existent matter, whether of the spirituous part of the seed, which is easy for God to do, or of the souls of the parents, as of Adam's rib he made his wife's body, which no man can do, but only God, it being more than God hath given to nature to produce such a work. Hence God is said to be a former of souls, Zechariah 12:1, as a potter of a vessel of clay.

Or the way of the spirit, may be meant the manner of its fashioning the organs of the body, in case

it be thought instrumental to God, it being, as they say it is, *Sui domicili architectrix*. How cometh the soul to work so skilful and curious a fabric which it knoweth not, nor can shape the like when it is grown up to

ripest understanding, skill, and experience? Only it is the work of the Lord, who, when he pleaseth to concur, the work is carried on effectually.

Also the way of the spirit; it is a hidden secret to us, if spirit be extended farther to signify breath, as often it doth, how the child in the womb can take its breath twenty weeks in the womb. If it breathe not, how doth the child live? If it do breathe, how cometh it to pass it is not stifled in the womb?

The way of the bones of her that is with child, for so the way may be repeated from the former part of the sentence, how they come to be opened to give passage to the infant, or how closed and shut again, and both without breaking; and how in some soon and easily, in others late and hardly, Job 10:10–12; Psalm 139:13–16. So is it in all the great works of God, which we do transact or pass through, as in our regeneration, John 3:8, and 1:13; in our victories over many and great corruptions and temptations; so in men's public vocations. It seemed an incredible work to Moses to deliver Israel from Pharaoh; so to Esther to work deliverance for her people; so to Samuel to anoint a king against Saul, 1 Samuel 16:2; so to Nehemiah to repair Jerusalem, yet, according to the good hand of God, it was done, Nehemiah 2:8; so to Zerubbabel to build a temple, which required Solomon's treasure, Haggai 2:1–3, &c.

Use 1. To teach women with child not to faint under the danger or difficulty of their travail, but to look up to God who worketh all. God, as he hath given a soul to the child, you know not what way; and as he hath fashioned the bones of the child, you know not how; so he it is that worketh safe and comfortable deliverance, Isaiah 66:9.

Use 2. To encourage men to undertake the works of their calling, though never so difficult and dangerous; go on, be doing. Little doth any man know by what weak means God bringeth mighty things to pass. Wherefore hath God so mightily stretched forth his powerful arm in our first coming into the world, but to give us a pledge from our tender years

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of his power and readiness to assist us in all the works he hath to do by us? Isaiah 46:3–4.

Use 3. To stir us up to give up ourselves to the Lord, in the new birth especially, which, though it be a great work and difficult, yea, impossible to flesh and blood, yet we little know, when God is pleased to set in, how much may be wrought beyond what we can ask or think.

Verses 6. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

Coherence, see in verses 5–6.

Doctrine 1. The works or labours of a man in his course and calling, they are his seed. The metaphor is borrowed from husbandry, who sow their seed in all seasons, morning, evening, winter, spring, Hosea 10:12; Proverbs 11:18; Psalm 126:5–6; Job 4:8.

Use 1. From the proportion our works have to fruits; whence they are often called fruits, Philippians 1:11; Colossians 1:6; Matthew 21:34; Romans 1:13. Now it is a usual thing in nature that the seed of all fruitful trees lieth in their fruits, Genesis 1:12.

Reason 2. From the smallness of it in itself, Matthew 13:31, yet yielding great growth and increase, Galatians 6:6–7; Psalm 126:5–6. It was a small seed that word, 2 Kings 5:8, yet brought forth great increase.

Reason 3. From the lying of it for a time, as it were, under the clods and furrows of the earth, in obscurity, seeming rather to fall into loss than to promise increase, Psalm 126:5.

Use 1. To provoke to sow precious seed, let our ways be fruitful, and fruitful in the best works. No fruit but hath his seed in it, and the better the seed, the richer the harvest; every man in his calling let him do his works of the best.

Use 2. To encourage every man to wait for a greater increase of his labour than it is worth. The seed is little worth compared to the harvest, 1 Kings 19:19–20.

Doctrine 2. Our ignorance and uncertainty of success of our labours in our callings should not dishearten us, but rather encourage us to a greater diligence and fruitfulness in them, Acts 20:22.

Reason 1. From the strict account we must give

of our time and talents unto God, Ephesians 5:15; Matthew 25:26–27.

Reason 2. From the abundant recompense of reward to fruitfulness in good duties, 1 Corinthians 15:68.

Reason 3. From the greater hopes of a more plentiful harvest when more variety of seed is sown. If one miscarry, the other may take; yea, and none will be lost. The merchant that tradeth in many barks is more like to see a safe return of some.

Reason 4. From the greater exercise of faith, hope, and patience where events are uncertain, 2 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 9:10; James 5:7.

Use 1. To exhort to fruitfulness in our course and calling upon all occasions and opportunities: 'In the morning sow thy seed, in the evening let not thy hand rest.' Seed in the garner multiplieth not, yea, rather decreaseth and corrupteth. Minister in his calling, 2 Timothy 4:1–2; magistrate in his, Psalm 101:8; every man in his, Proverbs 10:4–5.

Use 2. To persuade us to contentment in ignorance and uncertainty of events; and learn we rather the more dependence on the Lord for his blessing, and be more thankful for any good success at any time.

Use 3. To be more fruitful in that which is good, for our ignorance sake of the events of our labour, text.

Verse 7. Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:

Verse 8. But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.

Coherence, see verse 1–3. These words express and declare the fourth wholesome instruction which Solomon giveth to men that live in the ruinous times of a civil state; wherein he teacheth all men this holy duty, that however the times here may fall out to their own particular, yet to remember the dark times that remain after this life is ended, and therefore so to provide and prepare in this life, as that we may with comfort leave it; which duty Solomon requireth may not be neglected, notwithstanding three diverse things which might occasion the neglect of it: first, The sweetness of life for the present, verse 7; secondly, The long continuance of life to some men; thirdly, The prosperity and comfort

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able estate that may befall some men in their long life. Yet to remember, first, The days of darkness (which are coming after this life is ended) are many; secondly, That all the future time and work will be but vanity, verse 8.

The light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun. Light is a periphrasis of this natural life, Job 3:20; so here, as who should say, life is sweet; and so they that behold the sun are put for men living in this world, Ecclesiastes 7:11. And here both are put in opposition

to the days of darkness after this life is ended, which are days of death and burial.

Doctrine. Though life be sweet, and to some men long, yea, and comfortable all their days, yet let them remember that the days which are coming are many, both of darkness and vanity. The sweetness of life is argued by even Peter's loathness to die, even when an aged Christian, and the cause of death was honourable and grateful, John 21:18. Days of death and burial are days of darkness, Job 10:21–22; and in hell the darkness is extreme and everlasting; the darkness is outward or extreme, Matthew 22:13; notwithstanding the fire, Matthew 25:41; as a fire of brimstone, Isaiah 30:33.

Reason of life's sweetness: first, From many desirable comforts that we enjoy in this life, congruous and suitable to all our senses, and to all our affections; secondly, From the intimate union of soul and body, so as they both make but one person; hence loathness to part. We will lose any member to save head and heart, or any vital part.

Some men spend their days in prosperity, Job 21:13.

Reason 1. From the reward of godliness, Proverbs 3:16.

Reason 2. From the patience and bounty of God to evil men, Genesis 25:17.

Reasons why the days of darkness and vanity are many: first, From their continuance to the resurrection, in the end of the world, John 14:12.

Secondly, From the ignorance and oblivion of all things in the grave, Psalm 88:12, and 6:5.

Thirdly, From the disappointment of any labour all that time, Ecclesiastes 9:10; Psalm 30:9.

This to be remembered. Words of sense in the Hebrew are understood with affection and action;

so this word, Ecclesiastes 12:1, which implieth here, 1. Continual mindful knowledge of it; 2. So to be affected with care and conscience of it, as that it may take deeper impression in us than all the transient cares and comforts of this natural life, whereof, though the days be many, yet not so many; 3. So to provide in this life as that when our bodies shall sleep in darkness, yet our souls may enjoy the light and comfort of everlasting life and blessedness.

Reason 1. From the benefit of such remembrance. In so doing we remember God, Ecclesiastes 12:1, and ourselves also, Luke 16:4.

Reason 2. From the danger and folly, brutish folly, of such forgetfulness, Job 21:13; Ecclesiastes 3:21.

Use of life's sweetness: 1. For thankfulness to God, who hath given us life, and all the lively comforts of it, Job 10:12. 2. For thankfulness to Christ, who laid down his life for our sakes, Matthew 20:28, whence we are to live to him, 2 Corinthians 5:15.

Use 2. To learn to behold a greater sweetness in the life of grace, in union with Christ, in the light of God's countenance, Psalm 4:6, 7, and 63:3.

Use 1. Of many days of darkness and vanity, and remembrance hereof: 1. To warn us not to be so taken up with the sweetness of this life, as to forget the far longer time to come.

Use 2. To teach us not to envy the many prosperous days of wicked men here; their lightsome days here are but a few to their dark days behind.

Use 3. To provide here for life in death, and for light in darkness, and for felicity against vanity. Means hereof: first, Meditation frequent, and constant, and serious, of the shortness of this life, and of all the comforts of it, Isaiah 40:6–8; secondly, Not to rest in a state of darkness here, Ephesians 5:8; 1 John 1:6; thirdly, Behold Christ losing his sweet life for us, and mourn over him, Zechariah 12:10; fourthly, Walk in his light, 1 John 1:7.

Verse 9. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

Verse 10. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

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For a fifth wholesome counsel and instruction, Solomon giveth it unto young men, which is twofold: first, To know God will bring them to judgment, verses 9–10; secondly, To remember their Creator in the days of their youth, verses 1–7. And both this and the former counsels are but further motives and directions to take the counsel given, verse 6, 4, sowing our seed in the morning, and in the evening not to cease.

Reason 1. For after this life is ended, many will be the days of darkness, and they will be days of vanity, verse 7–8.

Reason 2. For youth is the morning of our age, and so a fit time to sow good seed, and usually misemployed to the sowing of vanity, verses 9–10. And there be three words that express it: שחרת doth properly signify the morning of age, verse 10. בחורת, youth, is, as the word signifieth, the choice age of a man's life, as that, 1. Which is chosen to most employments of action; 2. Wherein a man is to choose what course to take; 3. And which a man would choose to live in always. ילדות is childhood, which is the green flourishing blood of age or life.

Parts, first, An ironical concession to children and youth to rejoice in their days and ways: 'Rejoice, O young man,' &c. Secondly, A serious admonition to know the judgment of God reserved for them: 'But know that,' &c., verse 9. Thirdly, Hence an exhortation to put away and remove the passions and lusts of youth and childhood, verse 10; therefore remove the irascible passions of the heart and evil from thy flesh, that is, the lusts of the flesh. Fourthly, A reason of that exhortation, from the vanity of childhood and youth, verse 10.

Doctrine 1. God is wont in a holy scorn to give up children and youth in their own days, to take their own ways and to rejoice, or applaud themselves, in them. See the like kind of irony or holy scorn, 1 Kings 18:27, and 22:15; 2 Chronicles 25:8.

Question. But doth not God speak seriously, as allowing children and youth more liberties than are meet for riper years? as chapter 9:7–9.

Answer. There be some lawful liberties which God doth allow to that age, as Zechariah 8:5, and 9:17. But if he had spoken of these, he would have given some just ground of encouragement (for it is your

portion, or the like); but here he rather giveth a check and admonition against it, from a ground that is wont to damp, not lawful, but carnal delights: 'But know that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.' The ways of, 1. Childhood: first, Ignorance, 1 Corinthians 14:20; secondly, Vanity, serious in trifles, and trifling in serious things, text, verse 10; thirdly, Folly; fourthly, Falsehood, Psalm 58:3; fifthly, Forwardness, Matthew 11:16–17. 2. Youth: first, High conceits of their own sufficiency and worth, 1 Timothy 3:6; secondly, Inordinate and excessive love of liberty; thirdly, Wantonness; fourthly, strong affections upon weak grounds; fifthly, Impatience of counsels and reproofs, which is stubbornness, Jeremiah 31:18–19; sixthly, Prodigality, Luke 15:12–13; seventhly, Impudency, Isaiah 3:5. God giveth up children and youth to these ways, first, By not giving them his grace, either in restraining or

converting so soon. Secondly, By taking from them such parents, governors, and friends as might restrain them, 2 Chronicles 24:17; as he that taketh away a dam, giveth a running river leave to run strongly. Thirdly, By giving them up to a company of flatterers and parasites, sons of Belial, who encourage them to evil, 2 Chronicles 24:17–18, and harden them against wise and grave counsel, 1 Kings 12:10–11. Fourthly, By suiting the heart with fit and strong objects, and leaving the heart to the impetuosity of its own passions and lusts.

Reason 1. From the idol of self-fullness which God seeth in the heart of youth, according to which he answereth them and all others, Ezekiel 14:4.

Reason 2. From their wilful disobedience, Psalm 81:11.

Reason 3. From his delight to scorn scorers, Proverbs 3:34; Psalm 2:3–4.

Reason 4. From his purpose to magnify his grace the more, and to humble them the more in their conversion, Jeremiah 31:18–19.

Use 1. To humble childhood and youth the more, the flower of whose age is so much corrupted. If our choice days be so wicked, what are our dregs? If our first-fruits be so unclean, what is our whole lump? yea, and this spiritual judgment should humble youth the more, for it is a more dreadful judgment for God to scorn, than to frown and threaten.

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Doctrine 2. God would have children and youth to know that God will bring them to judgment for all their childish and youthful courses, and for their delight in them, Psalm 50:18–22; Revelation 20:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14.

Reason 1. From God's impartial justice to all, Romans 2:6–11. God taketh no pleasure in proper youth, Psalm 147:10, nor pity on carnal children.

Reason 2. From the proportion which God keepeth in recompensing like measure, yea, double measure of torment to deliciousness, Revelation 18:7.

Use 1. To charge children and youth to put away and remove from them their passions and lusts, the evils of their flesh, verse 10. Youth eagerly pursue their lusts, and boisterously contend for them, but lusts overwhelmed with the greater torments, *et potentes potenter torquebuntur*.

Use 2. To discover and convince the vanity of childhood and youth, verse 10. In regard, first, Of the many corruptions incident to their age,

mentioned above; secondly, Of their fond rejoicing in them, as a fool in his fetters and shackles; thirdly, Of the danger growing thereby, of impenitency here, and of judgment hereafter.

Use 3. To exhort both to remember their Creator in their prime days, Ecclesiastes 12:1.

CHAPTER XII.

Verse 1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, then thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

Solomon, to restrain children and youth from the vanities of their age, propounded to them a double antidote: first, The knowledge of God's approaching judgment, whereto he will bring them for all the evils of their youth, chapter 11:9, whence he inferred two corollaries: 1. An exhortation to put away youthful passions and lusts; 2. The vanity of childhood and youth, chapter 11:10. Secondly, The remembrance of their Creators in the days of their youth, chapter 12:1. The copulative, and, implieth a connexion upon the former, as the addition of another remedy like the former.

Doctrine 1. The remembrance of our Creator in the days of our youth is a sovereign remedy against the

vanities both of youth and age. It is a remedy against the vanities of youth before spoken of; and the words following, 'before the evil days come', &c., argue it is a remedy against the wearisome vanities of old age. Remember words of sense, in the Hebrew tongue, are to be understood with affection and action, by reason of the combination and concatenation of all the faculties of the soul in pure nature; like as of links in a chain—draw one and draw all, break one and break all, Luke 23:42; 1 Samuel 1:19; Psalm 106:4, 7; Hebrews 13:3; Revelation 2:5. Remembrance of God implieth and inferreth, 1. Turning to him, Psalm 22:27; 2. Trust and joy in him, Isaiah 51:13; 3. Service and obedience to him, Deuteronomy 8:11, 19; Psalm 9:17; Judges 3:7; 4. Thankfulness to him, Deuteronomy 8:18.

Thy Creator, setteth forth God as the author and fountain of all our being out of nothing; which argueth God to be, 1. The end of all our being, Proverbs 16:4; 2. Our preserver and governor, Isaiah 40:26; 3. Our owner and possessor and Lord, Isaiah 43:1; 4. Intimately acquainted with all our ways, Psalm 33:15; 5. Unwilling, yea, disdainingly to have his work

deformed or corrupted, Deuteronomy 32:5–6; 6. Able easily to destroy us, Psalm 104:29–30.

Creators, implieth more creators than one—all the three persons concurring in the work, Genesis 1:26.

Remember Jesus Christ our Redeemer, 1. As one that died and rose again for us, 2 Timothy 2:8; 2. And without whom we are strangers from God, Ephesians 2:12; 3. In whom we become new creatures, 2 Corinthians 5:17; 4. And through whom the Father is well pleased with us, Matthew 3:17.

Remember the Holy Ghost, first, Who uniteth us to Christ, 1 Corinthians 6:17, and without whom we are carnal and sensual, Jude 19; John 3:6. Secondly, Who sanctifieth us to God, and that in a creating way, Psalm 51:10–11; mortifying our passions and lusts, Romans 8:13; quickening us to righteousness. Thirdly, Who pacifieth and comforteth our consciences, John 14:16, 17, and that in a creating way, Psalm 31:17.

Reason 1. From the vanity of youth and age without this remembrance of our Creators, text; Ecclesiastes 12:1, with chapter 11:9.

Reason 2. From the benefit of this yoke upon youth, Lamentations 3:27–30.

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Reason 3. From the sanctification of the whole lump of our life, by the sanctifying of these first-fruits, Romans 11:16.

Use 1. To reprove forgetfulness of our Creator in this time of youth. It causeth old age to perish in such, to be good for nothing, Job 20:1–3. Youth and childhood is the seed-time of grace and all goodness. If in the spring no seed be sown, or none but cockle and darnel, and such weeds, what hope of harvest? Isaiah 17:10–11. From a threefold cause of difficulty, 1. Custom in sin, Jeremiah 13:29; 2. Satan's long possession, Mark 9:21, 29; 3. God's rejection, Proverbs 1:24–28.

Use 2. To exhort children and youth to heed this counsel. As the people said to the blind man, Arise, he calleth thee, Mark 10:49; so here God accepteth the first ripe fruits, Micah 7:1. He taketh it then so kindly, that he will after pass by many backslidings, Jeremiah 2:2, with chapter 3:1–3. It is the ornament of youth, of young men, of maids, Jeremiah 2:32.

Means by which God useth to heal such: first, Attention to the word, Psalm 119:9; Proverbs 8:34. Secondly, Mourning for stubbornness, and prayer for converting grace, Jeremiah 31:18–19. Thirdly, Abandoning of

bad company, Psalm 119:115. Fourthly, Reforming known evils upon reproof, Proverbs 1:23.

While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, wherein thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. These words begin a description, first, Of the wearisome evils of old age, from the latter part of this verse to the end of the 6th; secondly, Of death, verse 7; and both of them brought in as a double strong motive to urge young men in their youth to remember their Creator.

This former reason is taken from the support and remedy which the remembrance of our Creator in the days of our youth will give to the evils of old age, verses 1–6. The latter from our dissolution and return to God in death, verse 7.

Doctrine. The days of old age are evil and unpleasant times, and old age itself will so acknowledge it, 2 Samuel 19:35; and yet he was of the better sort of old men, and very well provided of all helps, verse 32, and as then but eighty years old, Genesis 47:9; Psalm 90:10.

The evils of old age are partly, 1. Natural: first, In

the estate,—the loss of dearest friends and acquaintances, Genesis 37:34, 35, and 42:36, and contempt of younger people, Job 30:11–13; secondly, In the body,—dimness and decay of all the senses, 2 Samuel 19:34–35, and manifold pains and aches and diseases incident to that age.

2. Moral: first, Seeking wealth greedily, yet loath to use it; secondly, Slow and cold in proceedings, yea, timorous and fearful, yet chafing at others' backwardness; thirdly, Hard to be pleased himself, and as hard to please others; fourthly, Complaining of present times, but praising former days of old, which the old men of those days as much complained of as he of these.

3. Spiritual: first, Ignorance; secondly, Uncapableness and untractableness to be taught or admonished, Ecclesiastes 4:13; thirdly, Pride of spirit; fourthly, Deceitfulness; fifthly, Impenitency, through custom, and hardening in sin and self-conceit.

Reason 1. From sins of youth, Job 20:11.

Reason 2. From the vanity of all creature-comforts, which must fade, Isaiah 40:6.

Reason 3. From the necessity of ripening in that age, either for hell or heaven, Job 5:26, in the autumn of our age.

Reason of old men's acknowledgment of it; From their querulous and discontented spirit.

Doctrine 3. The remembrance of God in the days of youth is a comfortable preservative against the evil and unpleasant time of age; for as an antidote against this evil, Solomon prescribeth this. Hence the age of Abraham and David are called a good old age, Genesis 25:8; 1 Chronicles 20:28.

Reason 1. From the blessing of good old age removing and healing the contrary evils. 1. Natural: first, In the estate; friends not lost, but gone before, and we haste after them; a crown of glory instead of contempt, Proverbs 16:31. Secondly, In the body; the power and life of faith to put strength in weakness, health in sickness, ease in pain, Hebrews 11:34; Joshua 14:10; the benefit of God's fear, Proverbs 3:7, 8.

2. Moral and spiritual. Corruptions now more mortified than ever, 2 Timothy 4:7; grace more lively, powerful, and fruitful, Psalm 92:14; 2 Corinthians 4:16; heaven (as a haven) in view, seasoning and sweetening all, 2 Timothy 4:8.

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Reason 2. From the gracious and powerful presence of God to support them in age whom he hath guided in youth, Isaiah 46:3-4.

Use 1. To set on Solomon's counsel upon young men, to be the more mindful of their Creator in the days of their youth, to find the evils of old age either more fully removed, or more easily borne. If young men neglect this duty in their best times, they will be far more indisposed in their evil days.

Use 2. To provoke such as are entering upon old age to be more solicitous of remembering God and themselves, seeing they are hasting fast into these evils. It is a just reproof to such as take no notice of decays of nature. See the simile, Hosea 7:9.

Use 3. To enforce carnal old men to redeem the opportunities that are lost. The evil of the times Paul maketh a motive to this duty, Ephesians 5:15-16.

Vers 2. *While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:*

Vers 3. *In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,*

Verse 4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;

Verse 5. Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

Verse 6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

Solomon having styled old age an evil and unpleasant time, verse 1, he now proceedeth to describe more particularly the decays and infirmities of nature in old men, which make their days evil and unpleasant; which are of three sorts: first, Some such as befall the former part of old age, whilst as yet they are able to go abroad, verse 2 to part of the 5th; secondly, Some of decrepit old age, when death is very near approaching, and themselves

drawing on fast to it, latter part of verse 5, with 6, 7; thirdly, Death itself, verse 7.

The decays and infirmities of old age, whilst as yet they are able to walk abroad, be,

First, The darkness of the lights about them, whether natural, as sun, light (of the day when the sun is under a cloud), moon, stars; or artificial lights, as candles, torches, &c. This darkness cometh not from the decay of those lights, but from the dimness of our sight, whence need of spectacles. I do not understand this to be a description of adversity; for though darkness be often put for adversity, and light for prosperity, yet we read not of the sun, moon, and stars put together for prosperity, nor the darkness of them put for adversity.

Secondly, The returning of the clouds after rain, is an allusion to the wintery state of old age. In summer after rain the clouds break up, and fair weather followeth; but in winter season after rain clouds still remain, and return. So, though in youth, after weeping, and coughs, and rheums dried up, the brain is clearer and drier; yet in old age, after colds, and coughs, and rheums, and pozes, there still remain and return clouds, and

vapours, and fumes in the brain, through the store of superfluous and excrementitious moisture of old bodies.

Thirdly, When the keepers of the house tremble, verse 3. Some take these keepers of the house to be the five senses, which are indeed the keepers of the body; but their decay is not fitly called trembling; and besides, of their decay he speaketh expressly in the sequel. The keepers of the house are therefore the hands and arms, which in young men are steady and strong, and do also keep both the body and house by repulsing annoyances, and providing useful things, food, raiment, &c. These tremble, grow feeble, and shake in old age.

Fourthly, The strong men bow themselves. When the thighs and legs, which in young men went straight and strong, now buckle and stoop, that an old man standeth in need of a staff to support him.

Fifthly, The grinders cease because they are few. When the teeth cease to chew meat, many of them being worn out. Teeth come not with us into the world, and they commonly leave old men, at least many of them, before they leave the world.

Sixthly, Those that look out at the windows are

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darkened. When the eyes grow so dim that we cannot see well with spectacles, which is a further degree of dimness of sight than was mentioned in verse 2.

Seventhly, The doors are shut without, when, or because, the sound of the grinding is low, verse 4,—that is, the lips, which are the doors, Psalm 141:3, are shut together; when, for want of teeth to grind the meat, the meat is rolled and chavelled in the mouth, and had need of shut lips to keep it from falling out of the mouth.

Eighthly, He shall rise up at the sound of the bird. The least noise of a swallow or other bird will waken an old man, through the natural dryness of his brain, and through the weariness of any posture. In the daytime he is weary of sitting, and soon goeth to bed with the lamb; in the night he is weary of lying, and soon riseth with the lark.

Ninthly, The daughters of music are abased, when either instruments of speech fail, which make music, or instruments of hearing fail, which receive music. Speech and hearing both fail, as in Barzillai, 2 Samuel 19:35; which is the more observable, that old men whose hearing is so quick as to be wakened with the sound of a bird, and yet the exquisiteness of the sense of hearing (to delight in the sound of music) is quite gone.

Tenthly, They shall be afraid of that which is high, and fear shall be in the way, verse 5; because old men are afraid of climbing, in regard of the stiffness of their joints, and unwieldiness of their bodies. They fear any stumbling-stone in the way, lest it give them a fall, or anything that meeteth them, lest it throw them down.

Eleventhly, The almond-tree flourisheth. When his head groweth grey and hoary, which is a flourishing ornament, Proverbs 16:31, but an evident decay of due moisture to nourish the hair of the head and beard. The almond-tree is the first that flourisheth in the spring, Jeremiah 1:11-12, and hath his name from early blossoming; it is here a resemblance of a hoary head, yet with this difference, 1. The almond-tree flourisheth in the spring, the hoary head in the winter of our age; 2. That tree flourisheth before fruit, but the head flourisheth after it. And yet it may indeed be said that the hoary head is the flourishing of the old man in the spring of another world of immortality.

Twelfthly, The grasshopper or locust shall be a burden. Whether by his noise (but of that before in the voice of a bird, verse 4), or, by an hyperbole, by his weight, an old man cannot bear the lightest burden; but most fitly, his slowness of digestion. Though the locust be a clean and wholesome food, and much used in those countries, especially of the poorer sort, Leviticus 11:22; Matthew 3:4, yet it is heavy and burdensome to an old man's stomach.

Thirteenthly, Desire faileth. Or appetite, either to meat or drink, or especially to marriage fellowship.

The latter sort of particular infirmities accompanying old age, are such decays of nature in old men as are found in their decrepit age, when they are drawing on to death, and mourners go about the streets; for they are not called till death, or till entrance into the gates of it.

First, When man goeth to his long home, that is, to the house of his age, the grave, where he shall rest whilst the world standeth, Job 14:12.

Secondly, The mourners go about the streets, to wit, the women skilful in mourning for the dead, and that with such affection and gesture and lamentation as to stir up mourning in a whole company, Amos 5:16; Jeremiah 22:18.

Thirdly, Or ever the silver cord be loosed, that is, the marrow of the backbone, which runneth from the brain through the neck to the bottom of the back, through twenty-four joints, and takes in therewith all the sinews; whence followeth a shaking and trembling of all the joints, and utter feebleness to use any limb without help, verse 6. Or rather the

sinews, which are the ligaments of all the members, and loosened by cold humours and palsy distempers.

Fourthly, The golden bowl is broken. When the skull is parted in the sutures or seams of it, whence the chaps fall, the almonds of the ears are stopped, part lifting up again.

For the Hebrew is the same with Golgotha, which signifieth a skull, 2 Kings 9:35; Matthew 27:33. It is a bowl because it is round, and golden, both for the colour and for the precious use of it, to contain and preserve the brain.

Fourthly, The pitcher broken at the spring, that is, the bladder is broken at the spring of water; the

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issuing forth of the water, or the retentive faculty of the muscle at the neck of the bladder being broken, so that water (urine) issueth from him insensibly without stay.

Fifthly, The wheel broken at the cistern, is the lungs broken off from their motion of inspiration and respiration by phlegm from the stomach, which is as the cistern from all the body. The lungs are as a wheel transmitting the air in and out, up and down; but though there be no open passage between the stomach and the lungs (and therefore is no ordinary purging of the lungs, but upwards by spitting and coughing), yet when the stomach is surcharged with phlegm, it distilleth it unto the lungs and stoppeth them. Look as when a man or beast is dead, there seemeth no way of entrance into the bladder for water; no, not for air (for if you blow it full of wind, none will issue out); and yet whilst there is life in the body, both water and sand pass through little veins into the bladder; so by the like secret passages doth the cistern of the stomach convey phlegm to the lungs, even to the stifling of them. And upon this stoppage of the lungs with phlegm, that the wheel cannot turn the air (or breath) up and down, in and out, followeth rattling in the throat, breaking off the motion of the lungs, and so death suddenly followeth.

Doctrine 1. The wisdom of God would have young men to take particular and special notice of the decays and infirmities of old-age, and by all and every of them to be stirred up to the remembrance of their Creator in the days of their youth. Solomon, the eldest son of wisdom, reckoneth up these infirmities of age, not to show his skill, but to teach us to discern these, and to provoke us by every one of them, and much more by all together, to remember our Creator early.

Reason 1. From our backwardness to take notice of these decays in ourselves, much less in others, and most of all in our young time, when there are no cords in our death, Hosea 7:9.

Reason 2. From the unlistness and undisposedness of old age to attend spiritual duties in the midst of bodily infirmities; as in Aaron in like bitterness, Leviticus 10:19, and in the Israelites in anguish, Exodus 6:9.

Reason 3. From the unsupportable wearisomeness

of these evils unto old age, when it is not eased and supported by grace.

Use 1. To show us the many bitter fruits of the sin of our first parents, even to our bodies, 1. Death; 2. strong cords to death.

Use 2. To teach us both the lessons Solomon here calleth upon us to learn: 1. The remembrance of these infirmities; 2. The remembrance of our Creator by them, and that in our youth, before they befall us in age.

Objection. But what can these crosses, and the remembrance of them, do to a kindly work of conversion? They are all but punishments of sin, and so sanctions of the law, and the law maketh nothing perfect, Hebrews 7:19.

Answer. First, Yet no commandment of God is vain, when the Spirit co-worketh; secondly, These infirmities, as the law itself, drive us to Christ, Galatians 3:24; and he, 1. Taketh away our sins, John 1:29. 2. Beareth our infirmities, Matthew 8:17; Psalm 103:3; and he supporteth us in them, Isaiah 46:4, and 40:28–31. 3. He reneweth the inner man with proportionable strength and comfort, 2 Corinthians 4:16.

Use 3. To comfort godly old men, in that God taketh particular notice of all their decays and infirmities.

Verse 7. *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

Coherence, see in verse 2. In these words are set forth, first, The first and last condition of the body, in regard of its material cause—dust returneth to the earth, out of which it was taken. Secondly, The first and last condition of the soul, in regard of the efficiency, cause, and disposing hand—the spirit returneth to God that gave it; meaning dust, by a metonymy of the material cause for the effect; dust for man's body made of dust, Genesis 2:7. Return to the earth, first, By burial in the earth, after the manner of the Jews; though in burning and drowning it finally

returneth to dust, to earth also. Secondly, By rotting in the grave, and dissolving to earth at last.

Spirit; soul, as being here opposed to the body. Returneth to God. Not every soul to dwell with him, for here the speech is of all men; but to be

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disposed of by him for his final estate. That gave it, first, By breathing it into his face at the first creation; secondly, By forming every soul of a sinful matter of the souls of the parents, or of the spirituous part of their seed, Zechariah 12:1.

Doctrine 1. As our bodies, being made of dust, do in death return to dust; so our souls, being given us of God, return again to God, Genesis 2:7. The body is made, not of the heart of the earth, that is rich in metals, nor of the soil of the earth, that is rich in fruits, nor of the sand of the earth, which is profitable for ballast, for hour-glasses, or for a sea bound, Jeremiah 5:22, but of the dust of the earth, which of all the rest is most unprofitable, like unsavoury salt, Matthew 5:13. stones are firm matter, clay tough, but dust easily dissipated and scattered with every blast of wind.

Objection. But is not our body mixed of the four elements?

Answer. Yes. *Reason 1.* For all these are found in us; our spirits are fiery, our breath is airy, our blood and humours watery, our flesh and bones, muscles and sinews, have much earthly matter in them.

Reason 2. We are nourished by all these elements.

Reason 3. We are dissolved into all these elements. But yet God first took dust, then wetted it and made clay of it, and fashioned it into the form of human body; hence, Job 4:19, the first foundation and matter was dust, clay made of it, and our bodies of clay. Dust only is expressed, as being first and predominant.

Use 1. For instruction to all men: first, To behold God's wonderful power, wisdom, and goodness, who out of a dust-heap hath formed such a curious and glorious work, Psalm 139:14. All the devils in hell cannot suddenly make a louse of dust, Exodus 8:18–19; and Moses and Aaron did make but lice of dust, verse 17. Secondly, To be lowly and humble-minded, especially when we come in God's presence, Genesis 18:27; Isaiah 45:9; 1 Kings 8:27. Thirdly, To be mindful of our mortality, Genesis 3:19. Every blast of God's displeasure scattereth our dusty tabernacle, even of

great men, Isaiah 40:15,23–24; and therefore to remember our Creator, and prepare for a change, Ecclesiastes 12:1,7.

Use 2. For comfort to the godly, first, He will

not deal with us after our sins, Psalm 103:13–14; secondly, To encourage us against the fear of men, whom the moth shall chavel to dust, Isaiah 51:7–8. To strengthen our faith in God's power to raise us, 1. Out of outward abasement, 1 Samuel 2:8; 2. Out of inward abasement, Psalm 119:25; and 3. Out of the grave, Daniel 12:2. Our bodies shall return to dust, that is, they shall die, corrupt, and return to dust, Genesis 3:19; hence, Job 17:13–14, 21:26, and 24:20, it so falleth out to great men, Psalm 82:7, and mean; wise men and fools, Psalm 49:10; rich men and poor, Psalm 49:10,16–17; good men and bad, Psalm 30:9; and all men, Job 30:23; Isaiah 40:6–7; except only Christ, who saw no corruption, and so no dust, Acts 2:31, and such as remain alive at the last day, 1 Corinthians 115:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

Reason 1. From the wages of sin, Romans 15:12, &c.

Reason 2. To root out the root of sin, Romans 6:7. Original sin is fitly compared by Epiphanius to a wild fig tree, rooted in the joints of the stone wall of a goodly palace. If it be cut and lopped, as it is by repentance and mortification, yet it sprouteth again; but when the walls are taken down, and the stones cast asunder, body and soul parted, then being built again, the root is shaken out utterly.

Reason 3. To prepare the bodies of men for an immortal estate, 1 Corinthians 15:50.

Use 1. To refute the vanity of carnal minds, who think to escape this common condition of all men, Isaiah 28:15,18.

Use 2. To exhort to the remembrance of our Creator, and to prepare for a change. Here we have no abiding city, we seek one to come, Hebrews 13:14; we are but tenants at will, our tabernacles earthly.

Use 3. To strike terror into the hearts of the wicked, who return to dust, now accursed after the fall, Genesis 3:17,19. It is now the food of the serpent, Genesis 3:14, and it is meat and drink to Satan to torment the wicked, who are accursed from God, and so depart, Matthew 25:41.

Use 4. To comfort the godly in distress, Job 3:22. Art thou in sickness and pain? thou art but grinding to dust, and then ease. Art thou grieved with a body of sin? Romans 7:24; dust will set thee free. Dost thou desire to be dissolved and to be

with Christ? Philippians 1:23; dust will dissolve thee, and be a friend of the bridegroom to bring thee to Christ. The soul of everyman is God's gift, Genesis 2:7; Jeremiah 38:16; Zechariah 12:1; Hebrews 12:9.

Reason. From God's immediate hand put forth above the means in making the soul in the body, which though it be not by creation of nothing, yet it is by efformation of pre-existent matter, whether of the spirituous part of the seed, or the souls of the parents, see notes in chapter 11:5.

Use 1. To employ the soul in God's service, to which end it was made, Proverbs 16:4; yea, to return it to him with advantage, Matthew 25:27.

Use 2. To feed it with spiritual food, as word, sacraments, &c., for it is a spirit.

Use 3. Then God may take it again at his pleasure, Job 1:21. At death the soul returneth to God again, Luke 23:43,46; Acts 7:59.

Reason 1. From the account to be made, and the reward to be received.

Use 1. To assure the immortality of the soul, and to reprove the brutish ignorance of such as consider it not, Ecclesiastes 3:21.

Use 2. To exhort to prepare for this return, and therefore to remember our Creator in the days of our youth.

Use 3. To comfort the godly in assurance of their return to God at the last.

Verses 8. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity.

In these words Solomon repeateth the conclusion of the whole book, which he laid down in the beginning, chapter 1:2, and hath proved by sundry arguments throughout the book, especially by an induction of many particulars. And now having finished his proof thereof, and demonstrated, last of all, the vanity of childhood and old age, youth and death, he repeateth again his conclusion, as that which he hath fully declared, vanity of, &c.

Doctrine 1. The whole estate of the creature from first to last, and the whole estate of man from his childhood to his old age, yea, to death itself, is a state of excessive vanity, vanity of vanities, university of vanities, Romans 8:20.

Excess of vanity; or therefore it is called by a not vain, but vanity itself, yea, vanity of vanities;

which is a superlative vanity, as holy of holies is a superlative holiness. Vanity of vanities, for it is vanities in the plural number; vanities of many sorts; universality, or universality of vanities. All is vanity. The universality of all creatures is vanity, and all vanities is found in the creatures. The vanity the creature is subject to is called the bondage of corruption, Romans 8:20–21, which is not meant of natural corruption, such as might be in beasts before the fall; for when generation was to be, there was to be corruption; but would have been no vanity, because the creature had then finished his work, as the silkworm, after a sort, hath done, and so departeth. But he meaneth a corruption that fell upon the creature by the fall; which is a corruption, 1. Through enmity of one creature against another, when they also suffer most, that are most innocent, Job 12:7–8. 2. Through their inward debility or infirmity: whence, first, Their often abortions both in cattle, women, fruitful trees, olives, vines, and figs casting their fruit. Secondly, Their labour to bring forth what fruit they do yield, even beyond their strength; whence necessity in the soil of lying fallow, in living creatures of barrenness, Genesis 3:17, and 4:12; Leviticus 26:20. Only weeds and briers and thorns, and such fruits of the curse, are brought forth with more ease, Genesis 3:17–18. 3. Through abuse, by making the creatures the objects of our best affections, Psalm 20:7; Proverbs 18:11; Job 31:24; Isaiah 44:17; Ezekiel 16:15. Thus we place our sovereign good in the creature comforts, and by making them instruments of wickedness, whether against God or against man, 2 Timothy 4:10; Jonah 2:8; Hosea 2:8; Jeremiah 22:21, 17; Micah 2:1–2; Job 24:15–16.

Reason 1. From the fall of our first parents, Genesis 3:17–18.

Reason 2. From the sins of any person or people in succeeding generations, Genesis 4:12; Leviticus 26:19–20.

Use. See in notes on Ecclesiastes 11:7.

Verse 9. And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order in any proverbs.

From this verse to the end of the chapter is the

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conclusion; which consisteth of two parts: first, An encouragement to the reading of this and other books of Scripture, from verse 9–12; secondly, The sum or scope and use of this and the other books of Scripture, to fear God and keep his commandments, set forth and confirmed by a

twofold reason: first, From the complete duty of man; secondly, From the exact judgment of God, verse 14. The former of these, to wit, the encouragement to the reading of this and other books of Scripture, is set on by seven arguments: first, From Solomon's improvement of his wisdom to teach the people knowledge, and that proportionably, according to his wisdom. The more wise the preacher was, the more he taught the people knowledge, verse 9.

Secondly, From the elaborate diligence in pondering or weighing, seeking out, ordering fit matter or words.

Thirdly, From the matter and frame of his words. They were words, 1. Of knowledge. 2. Of weight or power; the word signifieth to rule or have authority, as if the words were fit to command faith and obedience, verse 9. 3. Acceptable words; words of delight, verse 10. 4. Upright. 5. Of truth, verse 10.

Fourthly, From their efficacy, as, 1. Goads; 2. Nails, verse 11.

Fifthly, From their authority. 1. Ministerial, fastened by the masters of assemblies; 2. Principal or sovereign, given by one pastor, verse 11.

Sixthly, From their sufficiency: of these, my son, be enlightened, or admonished, verse 12.

Seventhly, From the vanity and wearisomeness of reading many other books, verse 12.

Doctrine The more wise a governor, or ruler, especially a preacher is, the more he teacheth the people knowledge. If it be read, Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, it comes to the same issue; for if the wisdom of Solomon caused him to teach the people knowledge, then the more wise a man is, the more his wisdom will incline him to teach men knowledge. But in Solomon's phrase it is used in way of comparison, as Ecclesiastes 2:15; however this is evident, it is the wisdom of a ruler, especially of a preacher, to teach the people knowledge, 2 Chronicles 17:7-9; Colossians 2:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:1, 12:1, and 14:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; 2 Peter 3:8; Jeremiah 3:15.

Reason 1. From wise men's knowledge of the excellency of knowledge, which ignorant men know not, and therefore regard not, Proverbs 1:22; Ecclesiastes 2:13-14, and 7:12; Proverbs 19:2; Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 27:11.

Reason 2. From their calling. They have a pastoral charge of the people, yea, of the souls of the people; rulers, Psalm 78:70-72; 2 Samuel 24:17; preachers, Hebrews 13:17. God giveth to none power of the bodies of his people, but he giveth them also charge over their souls, see verse 1.

Reason 3. For regard to their own comfort. Ignorant subjects will be either, 1. Rebels, and unruly, 2 Chronicles 15:3,5-6; 2. Flatterers, Hosea 7:3,5. 3. Barbarians. Ignorant people will be either, 1. Unprofitable hearers, Jeremiah 5:3-4; 2. Persecutors, which is worse, Acts 3:17; 1 Timothy 1:13.

Use 1. To teach all men of wisdom that have people under them, whether in church, as preachers; commonwealth, as magistrates; family, as parents, masters; that it is a part of your wisdom to teach your people knowledge; and the more wisdom, the more to teach them knowledge. Preachers, Jeremiah 3:15; magistrates, as before; householders to their wives, 1 Peter 3:17; children, Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:7; servants, Genesis 18:19; schoolmasters and tutors, Proverbs 30.

Magistrates teach knowledge, not only as Solomon here, by writing, but first, By providing and sending forth good ministers, 2 Chronicles 17:7-9; secondly, By erecting and publishing good laws, Deuteronomy 4:5-6, especially for the free passage of true religion, Ezra 7:23; thirdly, By removing stumbling-blocks (teachers of lies) out of the way, 2 Chronicles 17:6; fourthly, By punishment of evil-doers, Judges 8:17,16; Proverbs 19:25, and 21:11; fifthly, By preferment and encouragement of well-doers, Proverbs 22:11; Psalm 101:6; sixthly, by example, Psalm 122:1-2.

Ministers teach knowledge, first, By dispensing ordinances, Jeremiah 30:15; secondly, By exemplary conversation, 1 Timothy 4:12. Householders teach by catechising, Proverbs 22:6; wholesome discipline, Proverbs 29:15; and godly example, 1 Chronicles 28:19.

All of them teach by maintenance of schools of good learning, Acts 7:22, else knowledge is more hard to be attained, John 7:15.

Use 2. To teach people to be as willing to learn knowledge, else how shall others teach knowledge?

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Use 3. To teach us what is indeed knowledge; to wit, such things as Solomon taught, Proverbs 9:10: as, first, The vanity of the creature, especially of a man's self, by nature, as in Ecclesiastes; secondly, The precious sweetness of the love of Christ in the Canticles; thirdly, The right ordering of commonwealths or families, as in the Proverbs, chapter 9:30.

Verse 9. *Yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.*

Verse 10. *The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words; and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.*

Solomon in teaching the people, he sought out, and weighed, and set in order words of weight and delight, words of uprightness and truth.

Solomon, though a wise man, none like him, yea, though immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost, yet he set all his logic awork in teachings and writings to the people. For whereas there be three acts or exercises of logic: 1. Invention; 2. Judgment; 3. Method; and in these three the whole work of logic is accomplished; Solomon set all these awork to find out a fit matter and words for the instruction of the people. *Investigavit*, he sought out, is the work of invention; *libravit, trutinavit*, he weighed, as in a balance, is the work of judgment; he set in order, is the work of method.

Words of weight, מְשָׁלִים, proverbs; that is, words of weight, of power, of authority, such as are apt to sink, not only, like David's stone, into the forehead of Goliath, but into the heart of the stoutest.

Reason why so called, from their effect, first, As convincing and pressing down a proud spirit, 2 Corinthians 10:4–5; secondly, Lifting up a humble spirit, Isaiah 66:2, and 50:4; thirdly, Directing and ordering their own lives and others, Psalm 119:125. Words of delight, or acceptable words, not to the humours of the people, but, first, To the good pleasure of God, Galatians 1:10; secondly, To the estate of the people, Galatians 4:20.

Reason 1. As being most suitable to the image of God in his children. These words are as a seal, their hearts as wax; for all delight springeth from correspondency between the faculty and the object.

Reason 2. As making us men of delight, first, To God; secondly, To our brethren, Psalm 16:3.

Words or writings of uprightness or righteousness.

Reason 1. As suitable to God's will, which is the rule of right.

Reason 2. As aiming at right ends—the glory of God, the good of churches, commonwealths, families, souls.

Reason 3. As making us upright.

Words of truth:

Reason 1. As proceeding from the Spirit of truth.

Reason 2. As speaking of all men's persons, estates, of God, his counsels and ways, as they be, without error or guile.

Reason 3. As making us true.

Objection 1. But penmen of Scripture spake from immediate revelation, 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21, therefore not in a way of logical discourse or study.

Answer. It followeth not; for God breatheth as well in meditation as in sudden raptures, Jude 3; 1 Timothy 4:14–15; 2 Timothy 2:15.

Objection 2. Luke 21:14–15.

Answer. It is a word of encouragement to martyrs and confessors that suffer in a good cause, to expect immediate assistance where they cannot well forecast or premeditate to answer to sudden and unknown questions; otherwise, if a man knew beforehand their interrogatories, it were expedient to study how and what to answer, Proverbs 15:28.

Use 1. To reprove wearisomeness of the instructions taught in this book. When will our teacher have done with this argument, that we might have more of Christ? But indeed a gracious heart seeth the more need of Christ in the vanity of the creature.

Use 2. To reprove the rejection of studied sermons.

Use 3. To teach preachers the imitation of Solomon in studious invention, judgment, and order of words, first, Of power; secondly, Of delight; thirdly, Of uprightness; fourthly, Of truth, Jeremiah 48:10; Jude 3. Talents should be employed to best advantage.

Use 4. Sermons may be elaborate without quotations.

Use 5. To exhort to the diligent reading and hearing of Scripture. Even Solomon's books, they are studiously written; they are words of power, delight, uprightness, truth.

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Verse 11. *The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.*

Coherence, see in verse 9.

Doctrine 1. The penmen of Scripture and teachers of God's people were, for their spirit, or gifts, wise men; for their place in the church, masters of the assemblies; and for their calling, given by one shepherd, Proverbs 11:30.

Reason 1. From their immediate carriage by the Holy Ghost, 2 Peter 1:21.

Reason 2. From their discerning between the precious and vile, Jeremiah 15:19, and applying a fit word to either sort, Isaiah 50:4.

Reason 3. From writing and teaching unchangeable rules for all persons in all ages, to which nothing can be added, nor aught taken away, Deuteronomy 12:32.

Reason 4. From fitness to withstand all oppositions, Luke 21:15; Acts 6:9–10.

Masters of assemblies, as being first, some of them magistrates, though prophets also, as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Mordecai, Nehemiah; secondly, Some priests, as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, &c.; thirdly, All of them prophets, immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost, and so watchmen set over the flock, Jeremiah 1:9–10; Ezekiel 3:17.

Objection. But their place in the church is ministerial, not masterly, 2 Corinthians 1:24, and 4:5; 1 Peter 5:3:

Answer. True, because, 1. They command nothing in their own name, but Christ's, 1 Corinthians 4:1, but for the church's good, 2 Corinthians 13:10; 2. But yet in the name of Christ they call the assemblies together, Acts 6:2; and they rule them, being gathered, with commandments, rebukes, and with all authority, Titus 2:15. One shepherd is Christ, John 10:11, 16; 1 Peter 2:25, and 5:5.

Reason 1. As laying down his life to purchase us, John 10:11.

Reason 2. As providing food for us; leading us into green pastures by still waters, Psalm 23:1–2.

Reason 3. As healing our diseases, and seeking us out in our wanderings, Psalm 23:3; Ezekiel 34:16; Luke 15:4, he giveth the masters of the assemblies, Jeremiah 3:15; Ephesians 4:8, 11.

Reason 1. As instituting their callings, Ephesians 4:8, 11.

Reason 2. As furnishing them with gifts.

Reason 3. As opening a door for their entrance, John 10:9; Acts 20:28.

Use. See after the next doctrine.

Doctrine 2. The words of Scripture are as goads and nails, fastened or implanted by the masters of the assemblies, given by one pastor. As goads to stir up the people to duty, 2 Peter 1:13, and 3:1, and to subdue an enemy; like Shamgar's goad, Judges 3:31; 2 Corinthians 10:4–5. As nails sticking fast in the soul, Psalm 119:93, and fastening us to God, John 15:9; to our brethren, and to our duties, Nehemiah 10:29; fastened or planted, as Genesis 2:8, as if they were not dead, as door-nails, nor dry pegs, or stakes, or nails; but living plants, James 1:21, where his ἔμφυτος λόγος may seem to allude to Solomon's משמרות נטועים in this place. Ministers are planters, not only in the first gathering of churches, 1 Corinthians 3:6–7, but also in carrying on the rest of the work, as in building. Implanted implieth, first, The heart is pierced and cut by the word, as in grafting or planting, Acts 2:37. Secondly, The word taking root in the heart, wanting

in the stony ground, Matthew 13:21; not shaken out by wine, music, merry company, building, business, &c. Thirdly, Living in us, Hebrews 4:12. Fourthly, Growing in us, Acts 19:20. Fifthly, Fruitful in us, Luke 8:15; Colossians 1:5-6.

By the masters of the assemblies, implieth they have a ministerial work in implanting and driving these nails to the head, 1 Corinthians 3:6; 2 Peter 1:13. These words, and the exciting and fastening power of them, are given by one pastor, to wit, by Christ, as was opened in the former doctrine, Psalm 68:11.

Reason 1. The word is revealed by his Spirit, 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21.

Reason 2. His Spirit sharpeneth and pointeth it as a goad, Psalm 45:5.

Reason 3. His Spirit implanteth and fasteneth them.

Both the doctrines may be thus comprised in one .

Doctrine. The words of Scripture are the words of the wise, quickening like goads, and fastened like nails; implanted by many masters of the assemblies, yet given by one pastor.

Use 1. See here what manner of persons the penmen of Scriptures and the preachers of them be—to wit, 1. For their gifts, wise; 2. For their office,

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masters of assemblies; 3. For their calling, given by one pastor, as in the former doctrine.

Use 2. To teach the masters of assemblies how the word should be handled, wisely according to the sense of Scripture, and to the estate of the people. As goads, 1. Sharply, piercingly, Titus 1:13, quickening a dull spirit, Psalm 119:93; 2. Subduing and wounding an enemy, whether lust or gainsayer, (as Shamgar's goad, Judges 3:31,) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Titus 1:9. As nails, 1. Driving at first the sharp but final end into the heart, things that may most easily sink and take place, and enter, Hebrews 5:11-13; 2. Following the word with stronger matter, which may hold the heart strongly and closely to God, to brethren, and to duty.

Implanted. This is done by dispensing the word, 1. In faithful simplicity, Jeremiah 23:28-29. Human wit and authorities added to it do but adulterate it, like as paint do marble, or as honey and wine in children's milk; as painted glass windows darken the light; as a bombasted sword hindereth cutting. 2. In manifestation of the Spirit, breathing and speaking in the

Scripture, and breathing and speaking in the hearts and words and lives of ministers. Hence power, 1 Corinthians 2:2–4; 2 Corinthians 13:3–4.

Use 3. To teach us the state of the people without masters of the assemblies, to be wanting, first, In heavenly wisdom, Jeremiah 4:22. Secondly, In forwardness; hence need of a goad to prick them forward, Hebrews 5:11. Thirdly, In steadfastness; hence need of nails to fasten them, Ephesians 4:14.

Use 4. For trial, when the word hath had his kindly and true effect, and work in us—to wit, first, When it quickeneth us; secondly, When it strengtheneth us; thirdly, When it is implanted in us.

Use 5. To teach us to make use of Christ as our shepherd, whether we be masters of assemblies, or sheep fed by them.

Verse 12. And further, by these, my son, be admonished of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

In these words, as in the former, Solomon exhorteth his son, and in him all his subjects, and in his subjects all Christians, yea, all men, to be admonished by these books of Scripture, whether penned by Solomon or other masters of the assemblies. See this former argument in verse 9.

In this verse, first, From the sufficiency of these books: ‘By these, my son, be thou admonished.’ Secondly, From the unprofitableness and wearisomeness of making and studying many other books: ‘Of making many books there is no end; and much study a weariness of the flesh.’

Doctrine It is the duty of every son of wisdom to be admonished by the books of Scripture, whether written by Solomon or by other prophets; whether sharpened or fastened by the masters of assemblies, Psalm 19:11.

To be admonished implieth three things: first, To be enlightened, making the word a light or lantern, Psalm 119:105; so the word is translated shine as the light, Daniel 12:3, or brightness. Secondly, To be warned, and so, first, Reclaimed from evil of sin; secondly, Preserved from evil of punishment approaching, Ezekiel 3:17–21, and 33:4–6. Thirdly, To be made circumspect to duty; so the word is translated take heed, Ezra 4:22, and so used, Psalm 19:11.

Reason 1. From our relation to God and his prophets. We are their children, they therefore are our fathers: ‘My son’, text; Acts 3:25. God is our father and master, Malachi 1:6, and therefore all his words are warnings (as of the centurion to his servants, Matthew 8:9).

Reason 2. From the benefit of taking warnings, and great danger of the contrary, Psalm 19:11; Colossians 1:28; Ezekiel 3:17–21, and 33:4–5.

Reason 3. From the sufficiency of Scripture to that end, 2 Timothy 3:16–17. If they suffice not, none else will, Luke 16:29, 31.

Reason 4. From the unprofitableness, or boundless endlessness of reading or writing many books. One book allegeth and referreth to another; neither doth a man studious of books know where to stint himself. Hence falleth in, 1. Vanity, as of many words, so of many books; 2. Impotency of concocting them; 3. Fastidious loathing of Scriptures.

Reason 5. From the wearisomeness of much study to the flesh. It beateth and heateth the brain, it intendeth and stretcheth the mind, as if the body were set upon the rack, yea, sometimes to the breaking of a man's wit, as the string of an instrument stretched

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too high or too far. As in wrestling, so in studying, there is a striving, then weariness, then despair of overcoming, then giving over, then taking up, striving again, and so, &c. Much study drieth up the sweetest moisture of the body, whether blood or marrow, consumeth the cheerful spirits, whether of brain or heart, and so breedeth morosity, harshness of spirit, troublesome to a man's self and others.

Use 1. To refute the additions of the decrees of popes, of the apocrypha, of the canons, of councils, of the traditions of fathers to the Scriptures, for the direction of faith and life, Proverbs 30:6.

Use 2. To teach us what we are without the Scriptures; dark, and want enlightening; stubborn, and want breaking and warning; rash, and want circumspect guiding.

Use 3. To reprove the stubbornness of most men, who will not be warned nor enlightened by the Scriptures, nor made circumspect, Jeremiah 44:16, 17. Such will profit by no means else, Luke 16:29–31.

Objection. Yes, by affliction and correction.

Answer. No, not without instruction from the word, Proverbs 6:23. It is a sign God will destroy such, 1 Samuel 2:25; 2 Chronicles 25:16; Proverbs 29:1; Deuteronomy 29:19–21. The meanest child that will be warned is better than such, Ecclesiastes 4:13. A man that will not be admonished will become poor, though a king.

Use 4. To teach such as are to warn others, to warn them from the Scriptures—from every vice to every duty; as Paul convinced the Jews, Acts 28:23.

Use 5. To wean us from the vanity of affectation of much reading.

Objection. Much reading and study, 1. Helpeth a barren wit and weak judgment, by inventing new things, and clearing and confirming the old; 2. Solomon himself wrote many books, 1 Kings 4:32, 33.

Answer. Solomon's books that were not Scripture are lost, lest we should attribute too much light to them; therefore no books for this admonition in ways of religion to be attended to but the Scriptures; others so far as they explain or apply these.

Secondly, Books for other ends not so much to be sought after for variety, but for choice.

Thirdly, Those books we do use, we should seek to digest them by sound judgment and serious meditation.

Verse 13. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

These two last verses contain a second part of the conclusion of the whole chapter. The former was a pithy exhortation to receive this book, and other books of Scripture penned and opened by the masters of the assemblies, and given by Christ, verse 9–12.

This latter is a consecratory of the sum and scope of the whole book, which is summed up in these two: Fear God; Keep his commandments. Which is amplified by an introduction calling for audience and intention: Let us hear the end (sum, conclusion) of the whole matter, to wit, of the whole foregoing discourse of the vanities of the creatures, and of all the conditions thereof. And confirmed by a twofold argument: 1. From the sum of man's duty and safety; for this (to fear God and to keep his commandments) is the whole of man, the whole duty of man, verse 13; the whole safety and stay of man; that which stayeth with him. 2. From the strict exactness of the last judgment, verse 14.

Doctrine 1. It is a conclusion worthy of all attention, that the ends and scope of discovering and discerning all earthly vanities, is to fear God and keep his commandments; the same course John Baptist took to the same end, Isaiah 40:6–8. It is a conclusion worthy of all attention; for Solomon calleth upon himself as well as upon all his people: 'Let us hear,' &c.; as a cock clappeth his own sides with his wings, to stir up himself before he awaken others with his crowing. For clearing this point it would be opened, 1. What is the fear of God? 2. What are meant by his commandments? 3. What is meant by the keeping of them?

The fear of God, it is a holy affection of the heart, whereby we are affected towards God offended with the greatest terror, and towards God reconciled with greatest reverence, Hebrews 12:28; godly fear, Isaiah 8:13; Psalm 90:11, and 119:53; Luke 12:4, 5; Hebrews 12:28; Psalm 130:4; Exodus 15:11; fearful in praise, Hosea 3:5. Hence being

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affected to God offended with greatest terror, first, We eschew all sin whereby God is offended, whether man take notice of it or no, Job 1:8, and 31:21, 23. Secondly, No worldly dangers feared so much as God's displeasure, Luke 12:4-5. Thirdly, No matter so weighty as to seek Christ, in whom our reconciliation is wrought, 2 Corinthians 5:11, 14.

Hence being affected to God reconciled with greatest reverence, first, Christ in whom we are reconciled is most revered and adored, Psalm 130:4, and most closely cleaved to, Jeremiah 32:40. Secondly, His word most venerable and awful, Isaiah 66:2; Psalm 119:161. Thirdly, Our own ability is distrusted, and we walk in awful dependence on Christ in our whole service of God, Philippians 2:12-13; Hebrews 12:28; Romans 11:20; 1 Peter 1:17-18. Reverence arising from apprehension of his transcendent greatness and goodness, we worship him, and endeavour to approve ourselves to him, to be accepted of him.

2. The commandments, be the ten commandments, Deuteronomy 4:13, which is further explained in the gospel by believing on Christ, 1 John 3:23.

3. To keep these commandments is set forth by comparisons; as our way, Joshua 1:7; as our treasure, Revelation 3:20, 21; as the apple of our eye, Proverbs 7:2; and as our life and soul, Proverbs 19:16; that is, with all diligence, faithfulness, tenderness, and pre-eminence.

Reason 1. From the whole of man wrapt up in the fear of God and keeping his commandments, it is our whole perfection and safety. Life maketh us equal to a plant, sense to a beast, reason to a man, grace (fearing God and keeping his commandments) to angels, Luke 20:36; Isaiah 6:2; Psalm 103:20. It completeth our conformity to the image of God. It is our whole duty, and attaineth an everlasting happy estate, Deuteronomy 5:29, else we walk in vanity, Psalm 39:5, 6, and fear death, hell, the faces of men.

Reason 2. From the vanity of seeking after God's fear, and yet not weaned from the vanities of the world, Mark 6:20.

Reason 3. From the vanity of weanedness from earthly vanities, without learning the fear of God and keeping his commandments; such was all the devotion of popery, leaving great estates, yea,

kingdoms to live and die in a friar's cowl, Isaiah 1:11–13.

Reason 4. Of the attention due to this word and counsel, first, From the dullness of our hearing, Hebrews verse 11; secondly, From the weightiness of the duty, text; thirdly, From the noise of worldly matters and inbred lusts hindering our attention.

Use 1. To refute the Antinomians, who abrogate the commandments, and in sum hold forth grace without Christ, Christ without faith, faith without the word of promise applied particularly to me by the Spirit, and the word of the gospel without the word of the law.

Use 2. To teach us to make these two duties our whole work, Deuteronomy 5:29.

Verses 14. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

In the former verse Solomon gave it for a conclusion of the whole book, 'Fear God, and keep his commandments.'

Which duty he presseth by a twofold argument: first, From the weight of the duty—it is the sum and safety of the whole man, verse 13; secondly, From the universal and strict account which God will take of every work done under the sun, text, verse 14. So this last end of the book is the last end of the world.

Doctrine. There is no work, whether it be open or secret, good or evil, but God will bring it to judgment.

No work, whether, first, Of the heart, as counsels, thoughts, affections, 2 Corinthians 4:5; Jeremiah 17:9–10; secondly, Of the lips, as words, Matthew 12:36; Jude 15; thirdly, Of the hands, or other outward members of the body, 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 11:9; Psalm 50:21; not only of all the children of men, but even of evil angels also, 1 Corinthians 6:3.

Though never so secret. *משמרות נסועים*, *absconditum*, *velatum*, hidden or secret, so the word signifieth; not as the vulgar Latin turneth it, *erratum*, absurdly; for when he saith, *pro omni errato, sive bonum, sive malum sit*, it argueth some *erratum* is *bonum*. But if it be an *erratum*, an error or fault, how is it good? if good, how is it *erratum*, an error or fault? See then

their vanity that think the vulgar Latin authentical, or the church of Rome infallible.

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God will bring all to judgment. Many things in this world, Proverbs 11:31; Psalm 58:10, 11; all things whatsoever at the last day, 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 2:16; Acts 17:31; Matthew 25:31–46.

Reason 1. It is for the honour of God to rectify all the iniquity of judgment-seats, and other obliquities here below, Ecclesiastes 5:8, and 3:16, 17, with Micah 7:3, 4. As his infinite wisdom knoweth all iniquity, so his infinite justice cannot but give due recompense to all.

Reason 2. It is for the honour of Christ, John 5:23, 29. To declare the honour, first, Of his power, in raising the dead by his voice, John 5:28, 29.

Secondly, Of his glory, Matthew 25:31; all the elements burning about him, 2 Peter 3:10; all the angels and saints attending him, each one as bright as the sun, Matthew 25:31; Jude 14; a glorious high throne set in the air for him, Matthew 25:31; all the creatures presented before him, and bowing to him, Romans 14:10, 11. Thirdly, The honour of his wisdom, in making manifest the secret counsels of all hearts, with all secret conveyances, and that particularly, 1 Corinthians 4:5; Luke 12:2. Fourthly, Of his justice; both showing the cause of all his own administrations, why often it went ill with the godly, and well with the wicked, Isaiah 28:17; and rewarding all according to their works and the fruits of them, Jeremiah 17:10; which will not be accomplished whilst the world lasteth; neither the good that some have done by their laws, books, counsels, examples, &c., nor the evil of others.

Reason 3. It is for the honour of the church, and of all the godly, 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Micah 7:9.

Use 1. For information, first, That the account taken at the last day will be general, of all nations and persons; and also particular, of every singular cause and person, Romans 14:12; Matthew 12:36; Psalm 50:21; and that not secret, but open, so as all men may judge of all secret conveyances, Luke 12:2; 1 Corinthians 4:5. Secondly, That the day of judgment will be of longer continuance than a night or day, for so many businesses of all nations and persons cannot be examined openly in the space of a few hours or years; the day of grace is of many years, 1 Corinthians 6:2, so also is that of judgment.

Use 2. To exhort to repentance and faith, that he who shall be our judge may be our Saviour, Acts 17:30, 31; 1 Corinthians 11:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:10.

Use 3. To bridle all licentiousness and boldness in sin, and pleasure in it, Ecclesiastes 11:9; Acts 24:25.

Use 4. To exhort to sincere and conscionable, awful and fruitful obedience, 1 Peter 1:17; 2 Peter 3:11–14; 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10; text, verse 13, 14; Luke 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Use 5. To exhort to judge others sparingly and charitably, 1 Corinthians 4:5; Romans 14:10; Matthew 7:1, 2; James 2:13; but to provoke them earnestly to prepare for this day, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 11.

Use 6. To encourage the saints to patience, constancy, and comfort in well-doing and ill-suffering, 1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 Thessalonians 4:2, 17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6, 7.

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A BRIEF EXPOSITION
OF THE
WHOLE BOOK OF CANTICLES;
OR,
SONG OF SOLOMON.

BY
JOHN COTTON.

EDINBURGH: JAMES NICHOL.

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I

THE CANTICLES; OR, SONG OF SONGS, OPENED AND EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER I.

THE TEXT.

VERSE 1. The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.

Verse 2. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

Verse 3. Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

Verse 4. Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

Verse 5. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

Verse 6. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me; my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

Verse 7. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

Verse 8. If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

Verse 9. I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.

Verse 10. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.

Verse 11. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

Verse 12. While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

Verse 13. A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

Verse 14. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.

Verse 15. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

Verse 16. Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.

Verse 17. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

THE EXPLANATION.

Verse 1. The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.

Verse 2. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

It was the manner of ancient times at espousals and nuptials to indite and sing epithalamia, love-songs, Ruth 4:11,12. The title of the forty-fifth Psalm may seem to be penned by one of the chief singers of the temple, who now were all of them prophets, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, 1 Chronicles 25:1-5, upon occasion of Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; for though she was a stranger by birth from the commonwealth of Israel, yet his marriage was lawful with her. And therefore, notwithstanding this marriage, his love to God is still commended: 1 Kings 3:1,3, 'Solomon

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made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Solomon loved the Lord, &c.; for indeed herein Solomon was,

First, A type of Christ, admitting the Gentiles into the fellowship of his marriage-bed.

Secondly, This Pharaoh's daughter became a proselyte to the Jewish religion: Psalm 45:10-14, 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house,' &c.

Now, though that marriage song was penned upon that occasion, yet it ascendeth far above all earthly respects of worldly marriage, and by a divine and heavenly workmanship sets forth a heavenly marriage song between Christ and his church. Of like argument was this song penned by Solomon himself, not to express his affections to Pharaoh's daughter, or hers to him, or the good parts of either of them, no, nor the like respects to any Shunammite amongst the rest of his wives, as some have vainly conceived, for then how absurd and monstrous were some of his comparisons—likening his spouse to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot; her head to Carmel; her eyes to fish-pools; her nose to a tower; her teeth to a flock of sheep; her whole self to a terrible army with banners—but his scope is to describe the estate of the church towards Christ, and his respect towards her, from his own time to the last judgment, as afterward it shall appear.

Now, through this whole marriage song this decorum it keepeth, that though the calamities of the church be as well described throughout this song as the comfortable condition of the same in all ages, yet such dismal passages are veiled and shadowed under some sweet and amiable resemblances, lest the joy of a marriage feast should be darkened by unseasonable mention of so sad occurrences; neither are all the passages of the estate of the church in every age here described (for how can that be in so short a song?), but the chief heads of things in every age are sweetly, and shortly, and lively, not only pointed at, but deciphered. These verses contain,

First, The title of the whole book, verse 1.

Secondly, The description of the estate of the church in the days, first, Of Solomon, verse 2-4; secondly, Of Solomon and Rehoboam, verse 5.

Thirdly, Of Rehoboam, verse 6-9.

In the title we have,

First, The form of the book: it is a song.

Secondly, The excellency of it: a song of songs.

Thirdly, The author of it: which is Solomon's.

'The song of songs', &c. In Colossians 3:16 there is mention made,

First, Of psalms.

Secondly, Hymns.

Thirdly, Spiritual songs.

Amongst the Hebrews there were psalms made to be sung with instruments, as well as with voice, and contained arguments of all sorts for petition, thanksgiving, and instruction.

Songs were chiefly made for the voice.

Hymns are properly praises of God, though any of these are sometimes put for all.

Use 1. First, This doth let us see that it were to be wished that this book were turned into verse or metre in each language, that we might sing the Canticles as the Hebrews did.

Use 2. Secondly, This teaches us to strive for such a gracious frame of spirit, that we might always be fitted to sing to God.

This song contains the estate of the church as well in the worst as best times, yet Solomon can as well sing in the misery of the church as in her prosperity; and David, Psalm 69:2, hath as well psalms of his deep waters and calamities, as of his greatest deliverances; and the Holy Ghost saith, 'Rejoice in the Lord always', Philippians 4:4. And though singing be chiefly fit and requisite in mirth, James 5:13, yet we should be fit also for a psalm in our affliction. But we commonly in our ill hours are too sullen to sing, and in our merry moods our spirits vanish away in carnal mirth and jollity; but whatsoever the estate of the church be, we should have our spirits as ready to sing as to pray.

Use 3. Thirdly, Is reproved that ancient law and custom of the synagogue, which prohibited young men, under thirty years of age, the reading and use of this book; but what age fitter for songs than cheerful youth? And further, the amorousness of the ditty will not stir up wantonness in any age if the words be well understood; but rather, by inflaming with heavenly love, will draw out, and burn up all earthly and carnal lust; and even as fire in

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the hand is drawn out by holding it to a stronger fire, or as the light and heat of the sun extinguisheth a kitchen fire, so doth heavenly love to Christ extinguish base kitchen lusts.

'A song of songs', verse 1—that is, a most excellent song, the chiefest of songs; as when they would express the holy place, they say, The Holy of holies, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the servant of servants, Exodus 36:33; a Hebrew superlative.

So this is the chiefest song; first of all Solomon's other songs, even of his thousand and five, 1 Kings 4:32.

Secondly, Of all songs without exception; for though David was in his time the sweet singer of Israel, 2 Samuel 23:1, yet as Solomon's throne exceeded his in all other magnificence, so did his name exceed his also, 1 Kings 1:47. Yet this is no disparagement to the other songs; so neither that some of David's psalms should be styled golden psalms, Psalm 16:52, 56-58; all purified gold, Psalm 12:6.

Yet some gold wrought more exquisitely than others, and finer engraven than others; even some portion of the pure and holy word of God more exquisitely penned and polished than other.

Reason 1. The first reason why this song is more excellent than others, is because this song speaketh not only of the chiefest matter, to wit, Christ and his church, but also more largely than any of David's psalms, and with more store of more sweet and precious, exquisite and amiable resemblances, taken from the richest jewels, the sweetest spices, gardens, orchards, vineyards, wine-cellars, and the chiefest beauties of all the works of God and man.

Reason 2. Secondly, This song admitteth more variety of interpretation than any other, and also of singular use. Some have applied it to express the mutual affection and fellowship between Christ and every Christian soul; some between Christ and the Catholic church; some to particular churches, from Solomon's time to the last judgment. And there is a holy and useful truth in each one of these interpretations; but the last doth exceedingly magnify the wonderful excellency of this song, making it a divine abridgment of the acts and monuments of the church. And that this book was chiefly penned to be such a historical prophecy or prophetic history may appear,

First, By the correspondency or suitableness of the words of this song to the events of each age.

Secondly, By the repetition of the same description, and other occurrences in divers parts of this song, which would be a needless tautology if it were spoken of the same persons in the same time, as you may see if you compare chapter 4:2, with 6:6; and 2:7, with 3:5; and 8:3-4, 6, with 8:5.

Reason 3. Thirdly, By the diversities of descriptions of some persons, chapter 3:3,6, with 5:7-9, which would intimate and imply a contradiction if they were not spoken of several times and several persons.

Reason 4. Fourthly, By the sudden admiration of some new persons and occurrences, chapter 3:6, 6:10, and 8:5.

Use 1. First, We may here see the eldest son of wisdom giveth the double portion of excellency to this song above all others; yea, since the Holy Ghost giveth it; it is not therefore only canonical Scripture, but an eminent portion of it. It were profane blasphemy to prefer this song above other songs of holy Scripture, if it were not also given by divine inspiration as well as they; to prefer the invention of man before the wisdom of God were sacrilegious madness. And although none of God's ten proper names in Hebrew be once mentioned in this song, yet that impeacheth not the authority of this book more than it doth of Esther, where no name of God is mentioned at all. Besides, this book is full of such names of God as suit more with the arguments, as, well-beloved, brother, shepherd, O thou whom my soul loveth, the chiefest of ten thousand, chapter 1:7-9, and 5:10.

Use 2. Secondly, This must exhort us to a more studious reading and meditating of this book, as of a most excellent portion of holy writ.

Use 3. Thirdly, This shows us that as this scripture is canonical, so the penman of it is a canonical saint in heaven; for he must needs be so, according to that, not of Peter's successor, as the papists would have it, but of St Peter himself: 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost', 2 Peter 1:21; so that he must needs be a saint by St Peter's confession. And not he only, but Christ himself saith, 'All the prophets are in the kingdom of God', Luke 13:28. Now

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all the prophets came not near this prophet, and there was no Scripture but it was penned by a prophetic and apostolical spirit; and though Solomon did fall, yet, 'If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, &c. But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul', 2 Samuel 7:14-15. If some say, by this it was meant that God would not take away his kingdom; to this it is answered, he did take it away, but he would not deal with him as he dealt with Saul; so then this telleth us Solomon is a saint in heaven.

'Which is Solomon's', verse 1. Solomon the penner of it, but a wiser than Solomon indited it. The Holy Ghost maketh choice of his instruments according to the use he had to put them to; to set forth the estate of his church by the choicest treasures of nature, he useth Solomon's spirit, which was as large as the sand of the sea-shore, 1 Kings 4:29, 30;

Deuteronomy 34:1–4. And as God led Moses to the top of mount Pisgah to behold all the places and situations of Israel, so he lifted up Solomon's spirit to the mountain of activity, that I may so speak, where only all times to come are present, to behold the estate of the church throughout the present, and all after times.

Use 1. This is to teach us, as it was said before, that Solomon is a canonised saint, else he had not been a penman of canonical Scripture; canonised, not by Peter's pretended successors, who have shamefully erred in this kind, but by Peter himself, 2 Peter 1:21, yea, by a greater than Peter or Solomon, even Christ Jesus, Luke 13:28. That promise, 2 Samuel 7:14–15, reacheth further than to prefer Solomon before Saul in reserving the kingdom to his posterity, which he took from Saul; for even from Solomon's posterity the kingdom was cut off in Jeconiah. The promise therefore of mercy to Solomon above Saul reached to the bestowing of a heavenly kingdom upon him. Besides, in that place, two blessings are promised:

First, Adoption: 'I will be his father', &c.

Secondly, Establishment in God's house and kingdom; so that if the latter promise should not evince his perseverance, yet the former doth.

Use 2. Secondly, This is to stir us up to the reading and meditation of this book the more for the penman's sake.

The second, third, and fourth verses sing and show forth the estate of the church in Solomon's time; verse 5, the estate of the church as well in Solomon's time as in Rehoboam's. The verses following, to the ninth, the estate of the church in all the time of Rehoboam.

In the church of Solomon's time, four passages are chiefly observable:

First, Solomon's choice of heavenly wisdom, by which chiefly we enjoy sweet and familiar fellowship with God, Proverbs 8:34–35; 1 Kings 3:5, 10; this is expressed, verse 2.

Secondly, The sweet savour and fame of Solomon's gifts and graces, verse 3, to the winning of the love and admiration of the sons of men.

Thirdly, The drawing and gathering of all Israel to the king's chambers, the courts of Solomon's temple, verse 4, or his care to bring on his people to the public worship of God, and their respect of him in regard thereof.

Fourthly, The fall and deformity of the church by idolatrous worship, and toleration thereof in many, verse 5; and yet the keeping of the native beauty of the church in many others.

'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth', &c., verse 2. It is a prayer of the church, or, which is all one, some chief member of it, for a pledge of Christ's sweet and familiar acquaintance, and love, and fellowship

with her. Kisses are pledges and incentives of love: 'Men shall kiss his lips that answereth upright words', Proverbs 24:26. This is the effect of upright answers, men kiss his lips; but God kissing a man's lips is the cause of man's answering upright words. His breathing into our mouths a right answer maketh us speak accordingly; as, on the contrary, when one answers perversely, unjustly, erroneously, Satan then hath kissed them with his kisses; he hath sitten as a lying spirit in their mouths, 1 Kings 22:23–24.

'The kisses of his mouth', which is more than the kisses of his lips; the one is a silent gesture of love, the other implieth also amiable speeches, when Christ,

First, By the voice of his word, or,

Secondly, By the breath of his spirit, doth either,

First, Put wisdom or grace into our hearts, Psalm 119:98, or,

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Secondly, Speak peace or comfort to our souls, Psalm 119:110.

'I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace', &c., Isaiah 57:19. Solomon's wisdom is the grace of God, as wickedness is folly. The beginning of this wisdom is the fear of God, Proverbs 17; the end of it is the keeping of God's commandments, Ecclesiastes 12:13. This wisdom whoso finds, finds Christ, the wisdom of the Father, Proverbs 8:22, 35, in whom God is well pleased with us, Matthew 3:17, and in whom he, as it were, kisseth us. This wisdom doth not only enable us to walk godly to our salvation, but likewise fits us to go in and out before our families, before our people, and so enlarges us to all duties of our callings; and to walk in the ways of this wisdom brings peace to our souls, and to those that live under us: 'All her paths are peace', Proverbs 3:17.

'For thy love is better than wine.' The favour of God in giving wisdom, and thereby peace to a man's self, and others depending on him, is more worth than wine; that is, than whatsoever makes the heart of man glad, Psalm 104:15, and 4:67; Proverbs 3:13–15, and 31:6–7; Judges 9:13. This prayer was poured out by Solomon, the chiefest member of the church in this time, when he prayed for wisdom, and preferred it before long life, riches, victory over his enemies, &c., 1 Kings 3:5, 9, 11; 2 Chronicles 1:7, 10–11; Proverbs 16:10.

Or else this whole verse may express the desire of the church to Solomon, that he would express his love to her by his divine sentences, and books, and songs, Ecclesiastes 12:9, which are better than their civil peace, than the sitting under their own vine and fig-tree, 1 Kings 4:25.

‘Because of the savour of thy good ointments.’ Good ointments are the gifts and graces of God’s Spirit: ‘But the anointing which ye have received of him’, &c., 1 John 2:27; so called because they heal a broken heart, as oil, Luke 10:34; Isaiah 61:3. The oil of God’s grace heals the bruises of the soul.

Secondly, As oil doth make the face to shine, so do they, Psalm 104:15; Ecclesiastes 8:1.

Thirdly, As by the holy oils all the vessels of the tabernacle were consecrated, Exodus 10:23, 31, so by these graces all the vessels of mercy are consecrated to God.

Fourthly, By the ointment were anointed to their

offices kings, 1 Samuel 16:3, and 10:1; priests, Exodus 40:13, 15; and some prophets, 1 Kings 19:16; so by these graces are we anointed to God our Father in Christ, Acts 1:8, and 2:4, 7; kings, priests, and prophets, Revelation 1:6; John 12:3. Savour is the manifestation of these graces, as ointments are manifested by their savour.

‘Thy name is as an ointment poured forth’, verse 3—that is, precious, sweet, and famously renowned—‘therefore do the virgins love thee’. The virgins in this song are such as Christ hath not yet espoused to himself, nor spoken for in way of marriage, chapter 8:8, and 6:8, such as carnal Jews or the Gentiles.

‘Love thee’, verse 3—that is,

First, Honourably esteem thee.

Secondly, Affect thy sight and fellowship.

Thirdly, Seek after thee. This was fulfilled in Solomon, 1 Kings 28, 4:31, 34, 5:7, and 10:1, 7–9. His own people revered him, even all of them; his name was famous in all nations round about him; all the kings sent to him, and of all people some came to hear his wisdom. The queen of Sheba cometh from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear it, and counteth his people happy under it, 1 Kings 10:1–2. Hiram king of Tyre blessed God for his wisdom, 1 Kings 5:7.

‘Draw me’, verse 4. It will be the speech of Solomon to Christ, praying that Christ would draw him to the Father, near unto him in holy duties, and promising to bring all the people to run with him after God. Or it may be the speech of the church to Solomon, desiring him to draw them together, by public edicts and proclamations, to the solemn duties of God’s worship, and promising to come freely, to run together willingly in the times of such assemblies, which was done, 2 Chronicles 2:2–3.

'The king hath brought me into his chambers', verse 4,—that is, into those bride-chambers where Christ familiarly converseth with them; which were three:

First, The tabernacle at Gibeon.

Secondly, The ark at Jerusalem.

Thirdly, The temple.

Into these Solomon brought the whole congregation of Israel to solemn sacrifices, 2 Chronicles 1:2–6; 1 Kings 8:5, 14, 63.

The words following in this verse show a threefold respect which the people are to Solomon.

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First, They rejoiced in him.

Secondly, They remember his love better than wine.

Thirdly, The upright love him.

Their rejoicing in him is recorded, 1 Kings 8:66; their remembrance of his love more than wine is there also implied; for, departing from the meeting with such glad hearts, they afterward remembered the comfort thereof as more blessed than the peaceable living under their own vine and fig-tree. The love of the upright to him continueth all his time, even when his wives and hollow-hearted subjects flattered him and enticed him to toleration of idolatry.

But consider further that Solomon, when he is here set forth as the desire, praise, and blessedness of all his people, he is then a type of Christ, greater than Solomon, verse 2, whose heavenly fellowship and instruction the church desires above wine; whose graces are excellent, and procuring him love and renown; of whom the church prayeth to be drawn, and who leadeth us to fellowship with God in holy worship; whom therefore the people rejoice in, and remember his love above wine; the upright love him.

Use 1. This, first, Doth show us the happy estate of a church or commonwealth, when men of place labour not for preferments or worldly profits, for honour or long life, but for wise and understanding hearts, that may go in and out before the people in their callings, when they desire to be kissed with the kisses of God's mouth, that he would breathe into them such graces as be needful for their places.

Use 2. Secondly, This showeth what procures a magistrate love and reputation, when, being enriched with God's graces as sweet ointments, he manifesteth the sweet savour thereof in all his administrations. If any

man desire a good name, if any man desires love and respect, this is the way to get it: fill your hearts with the good gifts and graces of God; let God's grace show forth itself in your speeches, in your answers, in your practices; this ointment will be stronger to get a good name than any other noisome thing to hinder it. The virgins will love you, for they rejoice at your faith: 'And by faith our elders were well reported of', Hebrews 11:2. By

these Solomon got a good name all the world over.

Use 3. Thirdly, This is to teach a magistrate to draw on the people to holy duties by all means he can: by his proclamations, laws, and examples.

Use 4. Fourthly, To show that the greatest comfort of subjects, and the strongest love to knit them in all hearty affections to their prince, is his forwardness in drawing them on, and leading them an end to the holy duties of God's worship.

'Draw me, and I will run after thee', verse 4. If Solomon once be drawn, all the people will come after rejoicing, when they shall see the magistrate come.

Use 5. Fifthly, To show us a sign of a true spouse of Christ. Such a one preferreth fellowship with him above all things, verse 2, delighting in his company, in his ordinances. Thus did Paul: 'I count all things loss and dross for Christ', Philippians 3:7-8; so David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' Psalm 73:25.

'I am black, yet comely', &c., verse 5-9.

In these verses is described the estate of the church.

First, Of Israel and Judah in the last days of Solomon, and then of Rehoboam, verse 5.

Secondly, Of Judah alone, verse 6.

Thirdly, Of Israel alone after the apostasy of the ten tribes, verse 7-8.

Fourthly, Of Judah alone, in respect of his civil condition under the service of the king of Egypt, verse 9.

'I am black', &c., verse 5. The church is set forth by a double adjunction, the one contrary to the other—'I am black, yet comely'—and both these by comparison:

First, Black as the tents of Kedar.

Secondly, Comely as the curtains or hangings of Solomon.

First, Black by the fall of Solomon, 1 Kings 11:4,9.

Secondly, By the folly of Rehoboam, 1 Kings 12:14-15.

Thirdly, 1. By profaneness; 2. By schism; 3. By apostasy; 4. By the rebellion of the ten tribes, 1 Kings 12:16, 18–19.

‘Yet comely.’

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First, By the present purity of God’s ordinances in the temple, Psalm 48:1–2; 2 Chronicles 13:10–12.

Secondly, The constancy of the upright in cleaving to God, to the king, to the house of God, and David; the which was done in profession by whole Judah and Benjamin, and the Israelites inhabiting in the cities of Judah, but in truth by the upright, 1 Kings 12:17, 20, 23.

‘Ye daughters of Jerusalem’, &c. Children of the church are called daughters rather than sons, as being prepared as a pure virgin for Christ their husband, 2 Corinthians 11:2.

‘As the tents of Kedar’, &c.,—that is, of the Arabians who were called *Scenith* or Nomade, for that they wandered up and down feeding their flocks, in tents, which they made of goats’ hair, a coarse stuff of itself, and being weather-beaten the more homely and black. Hereto the prophet alludeth when he calleth the church of Israel Aholah, Ezekiel 23:4; and Jerusalem Aholibah, my tent in her, for she was then as the curtains of Solomon.

It was David’s grief that he was long conversant in the tents of Kedar, Psalm 120:5; the church was now like to these tents,

First, In their blackness, which resembled their adversity.

Secondly, In that she now lived among the enemies of her peace, the sons of her mother being angry with her.

Thirdly, In that black and sad defection which laid the foundation of the after captivity, when the church wandered to Babel, her tent being removed as the curtains of Solomon or hangings, having the name from the coupling together. Josephus saith¹ that Solomon’s halls were hung with hanging of Babylonian tapestry in their courses or suits, and the wall of marble underneath most curiously wrought with rich imagery; it seemeth also, each hanging inwardly more rich than other. Such was the estate of the church in time of public defection, pure and richly graced in the upright members, whom the better one inwardly knew, the more gracious they appeared.

‘Look not upon me because I am black’, &c., verse 6.

¹ Flavius Joseph. Ant., 2:8.

This verse hath two parts:

First, An admonition of the church of Judah to the daughters of Jerusalem not to despise her, nor alienate themselves from her in regard of her blackness, or, as it is in the Hebrew, Because I am she that am black.

Secondly, A rendering a threefold reason:

First, Of her blackness.

Secondly, Of their not despising her for it.

A third reason is,

First, From the highest cause of her affliction: 'The sun hath looked upon me.'

Secondly, From the instrumental cause, the anger of her mother's children against her.

Thirdly, For the meritorious cause, which she acknowledgeth was wholly in herself, her not keeping well her own vineyard, aggravated by the divers degrees, though they made her the keeper of the vineyards.

'Look not upon me', verse 6,—that is,

First, With a scorching eye, sunburning me, making me still more black by your disdain and separation, as the sun is said to look upon, that is, with a scorching eye.

Secondly, With a piercing eye, as the vultures do, whereof Job speaketh, Job 28:7, using the same word here used of the sun, which spieth out what he may fasten upon, any corruption or carrion.

'The sun', verse 6,—that is, God hath looked upon me with a scorching eye in displeasure, Psalm 84:11, for he was angry with Solomon. It came not by chance or civil causes in polity, 1 Kings 11:9, and 12:24, but by divine procurement; and therefore the daughters of Jerusalem do make such a use of it as not to alienate themselves the more from God by it. That which cometh from God should draw us nearer to God; he did it to set us more kings in the commonwealth, as Solomon had more gods in the church.

'The sons of my mother were angry with me', verse 6,—that is, the ten tribes were offended; yea, this anger of the tribes was excessive, 1 Kings 12:16, when it brake forth into such extremity, and therefore they rather to be reproved than the church disdained.

'They made me the keeper of the vines.'

First, God, 1 Chronicles 28:4–6.

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Secondly, All the tribes, 2 Samuel 5:3.

'Of the vines',—that is, of all the churches, Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:1; Matthew 21:33.

'But mine own vineyard have I not kept',—that is, not the churches of Judah and Jerusalem, idolatry and superstition creeping in.

No, not the vines of mine own house, my wives, Psalm 128:3, from falling to idolatry, and seducing myself to toleration of it.

'Tell me, oh thou', &c., verse 7. This verse containeth,

First, A prayer of the faithful dispersed through- I out the ten tribes, and commanded by Jeroboam to I go no more to worship at Jerusalem, but to go to Dan and Bethel, desiring to know whither to resort to find Christ feeding his sheep that hear his voice, John 10:27–28.

Secondly, A reason to prevent her turning aside, to superstitious worship by following such teachings as will not be subordinate to Christ, depending, upon his direction, but companions with him, usurping to prescribe with like authority as himself in his worship, 1 Kings 12:28, 31.

'If you know not', verse 8. This verse containeth Christ's answer, where observe,

First, A compellation: 'Oh thou fairest amongst women.'

Secondly, A supposition: 'If thou knowest not'; as if he should say, It is much thou shouldst not know.

Thirdly, A direction to follow in this case,

First, The footsteps of the true sheep of Christ who went up all to Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 11:13–14, 16.

Secondly, The tents of the shepherds, the lawful priests, who were there also; there they feed the kids and young ones, 2 Chronicles 13:10–11, who else might in time grow rammish and rank with superstitious and bad ministers.

'I have compared thee', verse 9. Here the civil estate of the church of Judah is described; for after that the recourse of the faithful priests and Levites had strengthened the hand of Rehoboam, he fell away, 2 Chronicles 11:17, and 12:1–2, and most of Israel with him, wherefore God sent Pharaoh Shishak, 2 Chronicles 12:2, 8–9 (for all the kings of Egypt were called Pharaohs), to subdue them to his service. So then the church of Judah is here set forth,

First, By her service to Pharaoh, as if, like horses, they drew in Pharaoh's triumphant chariot, 2 Chronicles 12:8. Josephus saith this Shishak was Sesostris, of whom Herodotus speaks; yea, of him saith Diodorus Siculus, that he caused kings as horses to draw in his chariots.

Secondly, By her acceptance to God in this service: 'I have compared thee to the company of my horses'; and so in the Hebrew, because they had submitted themselves under God's just hand, 2 Chronicles 12:6, 12. If Solomon had spoken of any of his wives or concubines, it had been a monstrous and absurd comparison to liken them to coach-horses. Also, because this is a marriage song, he setteth down expressly no dismal thing to interrupt bride-chamber joy, but veileth the service under this magnificent comparison darkly.

Use 1. This shows us what it is that makes the church black, wherein the deformity of it stands; in the fall and sins of the people, and of the princes, in declining to idolatry; in their folly, schisms, and rents from their mother; profaneness, apostasy, and rebellion in the church and commonwealth; these do darken the fairest churches.

If Solomon shall set up other gods, God will set up foreign princes in his kingdom; if he and his people will serve other gods, God will cause his princes to draw in foreign princes' chariots; if we be at unity with other gods, God will be at enmity with us.

Use 2. Secondly, This doth show us there may be a true comely church in the midst of such deformities, yet the true church of God in the greatest darkness is always comely. It is not the sins of princes and people that can take away the church's comeliness; they may bring blackness upon her, like to the tents of Kedar, but draw these curtains aside and you shall find that God's church is comely, like to the curtains of Solomon. Run we not therefore from the church because of her blackness, but run to her and embrace her in her most sad defections.

Use 3. Thirdly, To teach the children of the church not to separate from the church for corruption sake; not to look only at her corruptions, but to see her comeliness also; and not add affliction to the afflicted; much less are we to think they in

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Bohemia, and in the Palatinate, are no churches, for that they are now sunburnt. The Sun, even God, hath looked upon them, and it is not their mother's children, but the bastards of the Roman harlot have been angry with her. Let us not then look at them with a vulture's eye, as though we would behold nothing but corruption and carrion; nor with a scorching eye make them more black; but with a childlike eye to pity them for their calamity and blackness which is befallen them.

Use 4. Fourthly, Observe that the calamities of the church spring not out of the dust, but it is God that causeth darkness upon the church; yea, to speak reverently, it is he that looks at her with a scorching eye; he searcheth her sins, and, finding them out, doth blast her, that she is tanned and sunburnt. If then it be God's hand, let us pity the church so much the more, and strive with God to renew the light of his countenance upon her.

Use 5. Fifthly, It was a sin in them to be angry with the church, as some of the separation are, and do depart from us; and it is not a little sin and fault in us to despise other churches in distress. What! and if some cast off England, shall we reject it because some of the sons of her mother do so? How much less then when the sons, not of a mother, but of a harlot, hate the church beyond the seas, shall we then reject the church? God forbid!

Use 6. Sixthly, This teacheth us concerning Solomon, that,

First, He repented of his fall, acknowledged his being wanting of keeping his own vine; and,

Secondly, He wrote this song after his fall and repentance; else if he had foretold his fall and repentance before it was done, it might seem like the Jesuits' popish repentance, who confess to their priests their sin before they commit it. But he penned it after his fall, to assure us the more of his salvation, which some make doubt of.

Use 7. Seventhly, This shows us such souls are the fairest and most beautiful in Christ's eyes, as, not resting in the commandments of governments touching matter of religion, but do seek for the true church and pure worship of God, and follow it, though with neglect of their suburbs and possessions, 2 Chronicles 13:14,16. Christ calleth those the fairest among women who here inquire after

him, and sell all to follow him, Matthew 19:21, 27; Luke 18:22,28; Mark 10:21,28; so these that want means of salvation at home, are desirous to seek after them, and where they find them, there they go, and part with anything to enjoy the purity of God's worship and ordinances; these in God's account are the worthiest Christians.

Use 8. Eighthly, Here is showed two marks of the true church of God. Do any doubt whether God be God or Baal, and do halt between two opinions, not knowing whether to join with Rome or England? verse 8. Go then out by the footsteps of the flocks, where the faithful, hearing God's voice, resort, and will not hear any voice but Christ's; follow those.

How times are such, blessed be God, as every one may find out where the church is; but in the case of blackness and darkness, inquire then,

First, For such as will hear no voice but Christ's, and follow then, the footsteps of the flock; see where they feed, there join yourselves.

Secondly, Where you find faithful ministers, priests, as Aaron's sons, and Levites anointed with heavenly graces, thither carry your kids, there plant your families, to be fed under such shepherds.

Use 9. Lastly, We see here when the church neglects God's service, God gives her up to the service of foreign princes, to draw as horses in Pharaoh's chariots, verse 9; and yet being humbled for this, God will have mercy on her, and so dispose of it, that her service shall not be base, for God will make them to draw his yoke, though they draw it in the yoke of foreign princes, as Rehoboam and his people did, 2 Chronicles 12:2, 4, 8, 9.

'Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels', verse 10, to end. The estate of the church is here described, as it was in the days of Abijam, in these words, 'Thy cheeks are comely with jewels'; and as it was in the days of Asa, both in the same words, and in the words following to the end of verse 11.

'Thy cheeks'; that is, the outward face of the church, are comely with rows of jewels—that is, with keeping their right place and order and manner of God's own ordinances.

This Abijam proclaimeth himself to all the house of Israel: 'But as for us,' saith he, 'the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him; the priests, which minister unto the Lord, are the sons of Aaron,

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and the Levites wait upon their business. And they burn unto the Lord every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the showbread also set they in order upon the pure table', 2 Chronicles 13:10–12.

It was not so with the house of Israel, verse 8–9. Though Abijah's heart was not so upright as David's, 1 Kings 15:3; yet the outward face of the church, her cheeks, as it were, were comely with the orderly keeping and observing the ordinances of God, yea, and comely also was the face of the church looking up to God in distress, which moved him to deliver you from Jeroboam, 2 Chronicles 13:12, 18.

'Thy neck with chains of gold', verse 10. Chains of gold are wholesome laws, binding like chains to keep the worship of God and true religion

pure as gold; such laws are called chains. This was done in the days of Asa, Psalm 149:8, when he removed the altars of the strange gods, pulling down the high places, breaking the images, and cutting down the groves, commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and the people willingly submitted themselves to enter into a covenant or law, 2 Chronicles 14:2-5, and 15:12-15, that upon pain of death all the people should seek the Lord only.

'We will make thee', verse 11. This showeth the forwardness of the people to join with Asa in reforming religion and adorning the church, as is recorded, 2 Chronicles 15:10, 16.

'Borders of gold', verse 11; that is, the borders of the kingdom, pure as gold by cleansing and putting away all the idols out of all quarters of Judah, yea, and of Benjamin also, and mount Ephraim, the very skirts, and frontiers, and borders of the kingdom, 2 Chronicles 15:8.

'Studs of silver', verse 11. In works of gold are such eminent knobs as adorn the works with variety of colours, and metal, and workmanship, Proverbs 15:11.

Suchlike eminent works which did adorn Asa's reformation of the church, even to the very borders, were these three:

First, His renewing of the altars of the Lord before the porch, 2 Chronicles 15:8.

Secondly, The deposing of his mother from her regency, for her idolatry's sake, and defacing her idol, 2 Chronicles 15:16.

Thirdly, The consecrating and bringing into God's

house his father's and his own dedicated vessels of gold and silver, 2 Chronicles 15:18.

'While the king sitteth at his table', verse 12; that is, while Jehoshaphat sits at rest and peace, refreshing himself at home, God establishing his kingdom in his hand, and giving him riches and honours in abundance, 2 Chronicles 17:15.

'My spikenard', verse 12. An ointment of all others most precious;¹ of all other spices spikenard is of greatest estimation. This the apostle John calleth very costly, wherewith our Saviour Christ was anointed by Mary.

By spikenard is here meant the preaching of the word, which is of all savours the most precious, even the savour of life unto life, 2 Corinthians 2:16.

When Jehoshaphat was established in rest and peace he sent forth the priests and Levites to carry the sweet savour of the word throughout all the cities of Judah, 2 Chronicles 17:8–9.

‘A bundle of myrrh’, verse 13. Myrrh is an odoriferous tree, that sweateth out a sweet gum called *stacte*, which is preferred before all others.²

This gum is also called from the tree myrrh; his smell is strong and fragrant, and fit to preserve from putrefaction, and it is of much use in embalming, and God himself recounteth it amongst the principal spices, Exodus 30:23.

‘Between my breasts’, verse 13. The breasts are those that give milk, the sincere milk of the word, to the church’s children, 1 Peter 2:2—to wit, the priests and Levites. These, when Jehoshaphat sent forth to give milk to the cities of Judah, he sent with them a company of noblemen, religious princes, who added the more authority to the priests and Levites, and are therefore themselves said to teach in the cities of Judah, 2 Chronicles 17:7. Thus these princes were as a bundle of myrrh amongst the priests and the Levites, to decide all controversies amongst the people, both in matters concerning God and the king; to preserve the people and one another free from corruption in all matters, whether of religion or civil justice, 2 Chronicles 19:5–12. Yea, and Jehoshaphat himself, representing Christ the church’s well-beloved upon earth, he rested in the bosom of the church as a bundle of myrrh, sweet,

¹ Plin., lib. xi. cap. xii.

² Plin., lib. xii. cap. 16.

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and strongly preserving the people from corruption; from Beersheba to mount Ephraim he went about, throughout all the people, to bring them back again to the purity of God’s worship, 2 Chronicles 19:3, 4.

‘As a cluster of camphire,’ verse 14. Camphire is a shrub for smell like unto spikenard, wasting the obstruction of the spleen, and by the very smell of it making men *vegetiores et firmitores*,¹ more lively and more strong; yea, and available also against the biting of serpents; such was Christ to his church when the children of Moab and Ammon and mount Seir gathered themselves together against the children of Israel in Engedi, 2 Chronicles 20:12; for by the ministry of Jehaziel he made Jehoshaphat and his people,

First, More strong in faith to rest on God and his word, 2 Chronicles 20:14–20.

Secondly, More lively and heartily to praise God; yea, and he saved them from their enemies, 2 Chronicles 20:21–24, themselves not striking a stroke, though their enemies, the breed of the old serpent, put them before in great fear, verse 3, 12.

‘Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair’, verse 15. The doubling of the words expresseth the superlative degree by a usual Hebraism. Fair fair, that is, very fair, which showeth the estate of the church in Hezekiah’s time, who returned and set the priests and Levites in their courses, restored their burnt sacrifices and oblations, sanctified the priests, called all the people to the passover, 2 Chronicles 29, 30, and 31:1, 2, prayed for their healing, took away all the images, groves, and high places.

‘Thou hast doves’ eyes’, verse 15,—that is, chaste, and loathing uncleanness, as Pliny² reports the doves to be. Hezekiah loathed even the monuments of idolatry; even the brazen serpent, (though sometimes God’s ordinance,) when once the people went a-whoring after it; so by this means abuses that crept into the church in the days of Joram, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, 2 Kings 18:4, are not recorded till they come to be cleansed, lest the joy of the marriage song should be darkened by the mention of so sad occurrences; whence also it is that the abuses that crept in after the death of Hezekiah, in the days of Manasseh and Ammon, are not mentioned

¹ Plin., lib. xxi. cap. 18.

² Plin., lib. i. cap. 34.

till their cleansing came, recorded in the days of Josiah.

‘Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green,’ verse 16. This is the estate of the church in the days of good Josiah, who reformed it to the like estate of purity and beauty as in the days of Hezekiah; yea, in this he exceeded him, in taking away the high places which Solomon had built for his wives’ idols, 2 Kings 23:13, as also some other corruptions of Ahaz, verse 12; and besides, he made all the people to worship the Lord only, and to serve him, 2 Chronicles 34:32–33.

‘Yea, pleasant.’ It being more than fair, so young a man to work so great a work of reformation, 2 Chronicles 34:1–7.

‘Our bed is green.’ The house of God was the temple, the bed in the house were the ordinances of God, wherein God was wont familiarly to embrace his spouse, and she him.

These, in Josiah's time, flourished in greatest purity, 2 Chronicles 35:18, so that there was no passover like unto his.

'Our bed is green.' It is an allusion to the spring-time, when the worship of God began to flourish again after a winter-time of miry and dirty pollutions.

'The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters, (or walls, or galleries,) of fir', verse 17. These words set out the beauty of the church, 2 Chronicles 34:8, 14, in regard of the repairs of the temple made by Josiah.

Use 1. The use is to observe the several beauties and ornaments of the church, which are,

First, To enjoy each ordinance of God in his rank and place; it is as if the cheeks or open face of the church were decked with rows of jewels. Jeroboam made priests of the basest of the people, and such defect or corruption of God's ordinances is a blemish conspicuous in the face of the church.

Use 2. Secondly, Good kings ought to put upon their people wholesome laws, and strait binding to the purity of religion and the worship of God; it is no impeachment to their Christian liberty, as Anabaptists dote, but an ornament to their beauty, making their necks comely as with chains of gold.

It was the commandment of Asa, 'Whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to

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death', 2 Chronicles 15:13; 'And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present to serve, even to serve the Lord their God', 2 Chronicles 34:33.

Use 3. Thirdly, People to be ready to bind themselves by solemn covenant and oath to keep such laws, and to assist their princes in cleansing their uttermost borders and corners of the kingdom from superstition and idolatry; and it is no impeachment of Christian liberty to bow to Christian laws; yea, it is the beauty of a Christian church to wear those chains, those laws, which were made for the good of the church, and it was their profaneness and rebel lion that say, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us', Psalm 2:3.

Use 4. Fourthly, Princes to send forth savoury and gracious ministers into all quarters of their dominions, that all their people may taste and feel how sweet the preaching of the word is. This is the ornament of a

church, when Christian princes so provide that all places may be furnished with preaching ministers; this is to open a box of spikenard, that the smell thereof may flow forth, but to leave them relished with the dregs of superstition, this is a blemish.

Use 5. Fifthly, To see that the nobles and magistrates countenance priests and Levites, verse 13, and by their authority to give the free passage to the word, and to prevent disturbances which else might be offered to ministers in their churches, yea, all magistrates to prevent corruptions in matters, whether of religion or civil justice, is as if a bundle of myrrh should lodge in the breasts of the church.

Use 6. Sixthly, The Lord Jesus to refresh and strengthen the hearts and spirits of his people in public calamities, and to save them from the malignity and venom thereof; he is then as a cluster of camphire to the church in the vineyards of Engedi, as he was to Jehoshaphat and his people when they knew not what to do, 2 Chronicles 20:12. Christ is an ornament, and encourageth both priest, prophet, and prince, to sing a psalm of thanksgiving, verse 22.

And suppose enemies should be as a cluster in the border of the church, how easy a thing is it for God to

strengthen, and be as a cluster of camphire, to strengthen and encourage them against these biting serpents.

Use 7. Seventhly, Not to foster and tolerate inveterate corruptions, though received from worthy ancestors, but to hate all abuses in God's worship, even the very monuments of idolatry, and to take them away, as Hezekiah did the brazen serpent, 2 Kings 18:4, and to set each ordinance of God in his place; the church then is very fair, she hath doves' eyes.

Use 8. Eighthly, Young princes to begin betimes to lift up their hearts to redress abuses in the church, to imitate the best of their predecessors, yea, and to go beyond them, as Josiah did, and to restore God's worship to her native beauty and integrity. It is a fair, yea, a pleasant thing, to behold this forwardness in any, much more in young princes.

Use 9. Ninthly, To enjoy the worship of God, purged from all superstition, idolatry, and from all devices of men; it is as if a bed were green, fresh, flourishing, and fruitful. In such worship Christ delights to reveal and communicate himself familiarly with his people, and loveth not to come into a harlot's bed, decked with the laces of tapestry of Egypt, Proverbs 7:16.

Use 10. Tenthly, Suppose the church again and again be laid waste, so that instead of camphire is mass and idolatry, it is an easy thing with God to send a Josiah to root out such superstitions; that though abuses crept into the church for three or four princes' lives, yet God can cleanse and reform her, as he did in Josiah's time. God looks not at the corruptions of his church thereby to loathe her, but to heal her, and thereby to glorify his grace in her recovery, rather than his holiness in the discovery of her pollutions.

The bed is here mentioned in the spring of her flourishing, when it began to wax green, not in the winter season of her dirty pollutions; and before, the chaste eyes of the dove recorded, abhorring uncleanness, not the eyes full of adultery, bringing spiritual pollutions into the church, 2 Peter 2:14. When there is any superstitious worship, there it is overspread with winter, but when it is purged, then is the bed green; when God's ordinances are kept pure, there Christ delighteth to be.

Use 11. Eleventhly, It is an ornament of the

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church to restore her with beams of cedar, and her walls or galleries with fir. Cedar is famous for durableness, enduring even to eternity, saith Pliny.¹ Fir is acceptable for his sweetness, and while he groweth, for his height, straightness, and perpetual greenness; Solomon's house or temple was of old a lively type, partly,

First, Of the human body of Christ, the temple of the deity, John 2:19, 21.

Secondly, Of the mystical body of Christ, Colossians 2:9, his church or congregation, 1 Corinthians 3:16, and 6:19. Christ's human body never decayeth, and therefore needeth no repairing; his mystical body, the church, if it fall into decay, through corruption of doctrine or worship, it may be most fitly repaired,

First, By laying in the walls of the church such solid and eternal truths of God as may hold up the walls of the building.

Thus Luther restored the church by laying this beam of cedar, the doctrine of free justification by Christ.

Secondly, By setting up such worship and works for the people to walk in as are truly sweet and amiable in God's sight, springing from fresh and green sincerity, growing up to the heavens; these are like galleries of fir, whereas vows of perfection, and works of supererogation, and all other

relics and rags of popery, are no better than rotten and moth-eaten wood, fit fuel for the fire.

CHAPTER II.

THE TEXT.

Verse 1. I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

Verse 2. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

Verse 3. As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

Verse 4. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

Verse 5. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.

¹ Plin., lib. xiii. cap. 5, 16, 41.

Verse 6. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.

Verse 7. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

Verse 8. The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

Verse 9. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice.

Verse 10. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Verse 11. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

Verse 12. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

Verse 13. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Verse 14. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

Verse 15. Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

Verse 16. My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.

Verse 17. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

THE EXPLANATION.

Verse 1. I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

The estate of the church from Josiah's repair of the temple, in the last verse of the last chapter, is described here,

First, Before the captivity, verses 1–2, under the last days of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, 2 Kings 23:30, 34, and 24:6, 17.

Secondly, In the captivity:

1. At home, the remnant, verse 3.
2. Abroad, in Babylon, verses 4–7.

Thirdly, In the end after the captivity, where is described,

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1. Her calling out of captivity, to return and worship in Jerusalem, verses 8–13.

Secondly, Her estate at Jerusalem till the days of the Maccabees, verses 14–17.

'I am the rose.' The rose is,

First, Lovely for beauty.

Secondly, Sweet for smell, comforting both heart and brain.

Thirdly, Wholesome for use, and medicinal.

'Of Sharon.' Sharon was a fruitful field lying under Bashan, where the herds were wont to feed, excellent for fatness and fruitfulness, 1 Chronicles 5:16–17, and 27:29; Isaiah 33:9, and 35:2.

'And the lily.' The lily is, first, Fragrant, Matthew 6:28, 29.

Secondly, Fair, yet of the valleys, where the herds used to feed, as in Sharon, 1 Chronicles 27:29.

These words then set forth the church's complaint at that time, as some interpreters of chief worth have conceived it, though the words may as fitly be uttered by Christ himself, to set forth both his own disposition and the church's estate.

The first, He was then the rose of the field, the lily of the valleys, to show that when the church despised him to converse with her in the temple, and the worship there celebrated, he was now ready to leave his temple, and to be a sanctuary to his church abroad, chapter 1:16–17; Ezekiel 9:3, 10:4, 9, and 11:23, 16.

Secondly, Christ is here described according to the estate of the church of that time, which wanted culture, ordering, and dressing, thorns and briars growing up in the church, and not weeded out. The wicked are as thorns and briars, 2 Samuel 23:6; and store of them growing up in the church, Micah 7:4.

When the church is as a garden enclosed, Canticles 4:12, then briars and thorns are weeded out; but neither magistrate nor minister did his duty in removing offences in those days; so lilies of the field are taken for lilies neglected, Matthew 6:28–29, which neither take care for themselves, nor others take care for them, verse 2–3.

Thirdly, As the rose of the field, or lilies of the valleys, or lily amongst the thorns, is continually,

First, Subject to be pricked and rent with thorns.

Secondly, Trodden under foot by the herds of beasts; so the church was then subject,

1. To be vexed with the wicked growing up with her.
2. To be trodden under foot by the beasts of the field, the Babylonians, the Egyptians.

Josiah, how sweet a roe! how fair a lily! yet how untimely trodden down by Necho! 2 Chronicles 35:22–24. The other kings were placed, displaced, imprisoned, and the whole kingdom with them, at the pleasure

of the Babylonians and Egyptians, 2 Chronicles 36:17, and in the end the whole church laid waste by the Babylonians.

Again, Christ is the rose and lily, as being,

First, Sweet with the savour of his graces.

Secondly, Beautiful.

Thirdly, Medicinable.

When the church is corrupt in itself, it is yet fair and sweet in Christ; in him our life is hid in our worst taking, Colossians 3:3, he being white as a lily by the purity of his righteousness, we likewise are white as lilies in him, clothed with his righteousness.

‘As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons; I sat me down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste’, verse 3. A tree, first, Not tall, as the cedar of Lebanon, not strong, as the oaks of Bashan, but a tree of middle stature, implying an inferior magistrate, not so high and mighty as the monarchs of the world, yet such whose shadow yields,

First, Refreshing to a man wandering and fainting in a wild forest.

Secondly, Whose fruit is sweet and comfortable. Such was Christ to his church, dispensing himself in Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar made governor over the remnant of the people that were left in the land, 2 Kings 25:22.

First, Under him, as under a shadow, they were fearless and safe, 2 Kings 25:23–25; but after he was cut down they were driven from under his shadow, and durst stay no longer in their own country, which was left as a wild forest, verse 26.

Secondly, They gathered,

First, Much sweet summer fruit, Jeremiah 40:10–12.

Secondly, Much good instruction and direction from Jeremiah and Baruch, Jeremiah 40:6, and 43:6, who both lived with him.

‘Wine-cellar’, verse 4. Hebrews, House of wine, not so

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fitly termed banqueting house, which Solomon expresseth by another name, Ecclesiastes 7:2. A wine-cellar is a low vault under the ground, dark, cold, raw, and gloomy, yet replenished with vessels of liquor, which refresheth and enlargeth the heart, and openeth the mouth.

This house, to the church, was Babylon, whither God brought his people into captivity, which at first view seemed doleful and heavy, but afterward yielded to them many sweet tastes, yea, deep draughts of God’s

favour. God's Spirit coming upon men makes them seem as full of new wine, Acts 2:13; it refresheth and enlargeth the heart, and openeth the mouth,

First, To the praise of God.

Secondly, To the edification of his church. Such a spirit God poured upon Daniel, Ezekiel, Shadrach, and his fellows in the captivity, Daniel 1:19–20.

'And his banner over me was love.'

Banner:

First, For an ensign of defence to the church.

Secondly, For a flag of defiance to their enemies. How lovingly and gloriously, as with a banner of love displayed, did God defend the three children, and Daniel himself! Daniel 3:25, and 4:22.

How did God offer defiance to idolatry in the three children! Daniel 5:16–18, and 6:10.

'Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love', verse 5. I, the church, is here faint and sick, and ready to swoon, for desire of further fellowship with Christ, and for her own help desireth,

First, Flagons of wine to stay her.

Secondly, Apples to comfort her, as indeed apples do comfort the heart and stomach, prevents swooning, and restrains poison.¹ Thus Daniel, through abundance of revelations, was faint and sick, and desirous of more clear knowledge of his visions, and of the church's deliverance, and found the angel ready to refresh and strengthen him, Daniel 8:27, and 10:12, 15, 19. And the other members of the church, feeling such sweet taste of Christ's presence amongst them in the captivity, were, doubtless, earnestly desirous of more full enjoying him perfectly,

First, By the ministry of the prophets, as by flagons of wine.

¹ Fernelius, a physician.

Secondly, By the magistracy of Daniel and his fellows, Daniel 2:48–49, whom the king set up for inferior magistrates, as by apples, the fruit of the apple-trees.

'His left hand is under my head, his right hand doth embrace me', verse 6.

The words may be either a narration how it is, or a prayer that it may be; so in the original the blessings of God's left hand are riches and glory, and of his right hand length of days or immortality, Proverbs 3:16. Riches

and honours God conveyeth to us by the hand of the magistrate, immortality by the hand of ministers.

The church therefore desireth God in her captivity, which thing also God granted, that,

First, Princes should be the lifters up of her head, her nursing fathers and mothers.

Secondly, Prophets and priests might deliver to her the sweet testimonies of Christ's embracing love; this was done by Evil-merodach to Jehoiachin, 2 Kings 25:27,30, and by the ministry of Daniel and Ezekiel, Daniel 2:48-49.

The princes allowed them great liberty, the prophets dispensed heavenly and comfortable doctrine, Jeremiah 29:5-6.

'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please', verse 7. Hebrews, I adjure you—that is, I cause you to swear by the roes and by the hinds of the field, not by them as the persons thou art to swear by, but by those for whose sake and by whose means they are to take themselves bound as by a solemn oath not to stir up or awake my love—that is, not to provoke Christ to exercise his church by any change of their estate till it shall please himself.

These roes and hinds are wild and fearful creatures, easily and swiftly running away, yet otherwise willing to feed with the sheep; such were then the Gentiles willing to converse with the Jews, and to come towards religion; yet if the estate of the church should have proved more troublesome by any indiscreet or offensive carriage of the Jews, they would soon have started back from fellowship with them. For their sakes therefore the church chargeth her daughters, as by an oath, not to disturb the peace of Babel, not to seek preposterously deliverance from

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thence before the time that Christ had appointed, lest it turned to the disturbance of her peace, and to the carrying away such Gentiles as were coming on to be proselytes, Jeremiah 29:4-9.

Use 1. This may first let us see, that notwithstanding the reformation of religion, Christ may be pleased rather to live abroad in the fields than at home, where the people would willingly assemble. The house of God was now repaired, and the bed green, verse 16-17; and the church invites Christ to come in unto her in it, yet he disposeth himself so as more willing to call her abroad. So we may see that notwithstanding the purity

and simplicity of Christ's worship, yet Christ is not bound to any place; if things were never so reformed, yet he might leave us, and go into the wild field. Rome hath long doated on Peter's chair, and Jerusalem might as well have bragged of her privileges as any other place, but Christ leaves them. Never rest we then in any outward estate, for Christ may leave us. The Palatinate hath been as reformed as any church for doctrine, and though they might say their bed was green, and their beams were of cedar, and their rafters of fir, yet God hath left them; for do we think that if God had been there these things had befallen them that now are?

Use 2. Secondly, This lets us see that though magistrates and ministers should both neglect their duties in ordering and dressing the church, so that the wicked were tolerated to grow up with them, yet God keeps the spirits of his children sweet and pure, as roses and lilies in the midst of briers and thorns. Be not deceived then, for there may be roses and lilies growing where is nothing but briers and thorns to scratch them. It is not straight no church, when it is there, for Christ can see his church though she be there.

Use 3. Thirdly, We may here observe against the separatist, that it is not straight no church that is commingled, as they speak, with notorious wicked ones. The church may be Christ's love, yea, and a fragrant and pure flower in his sight and nostrils, and yet live amongst briers and thorns.

Use 4. Fourthly, Observe the state of the church is sometimes exposed to opportunity of treading under foot, no wall nor hedge to fence them; it may lie open?

First, To scratching and rending of thorns.,

Secondly, To treading under foot of the wild beasts, Psalm 80:12-13.

Use 5. Fifthly, This serves to direct inferior magistrates how to carry themselves towards the church, to be as apple-trees in a wood, wherein the church travelling may find,

First, Shadow of protection.

Secondly, Sweet fruit of loving mercy.

Use 6. Sixthly, We may here see the wonderful power of God and goodness to his church, in turning their house of bondage into a house of wine, in spreading also his banner of love over them in their greatest distresses and dangers. What more doleful times of his church than captivity, when men would think God carries his church into a dungeon, then he carries her into a wine-cellar. This may be a ground of solid comfort to

us in our worst takings; for though we be in the greatest extremity, yea, in the deepest dungeon of darkness, God can sustain and uphold us here, and refresh us with many comforts.

Use 7. Seventhly, This ought to stir us up to more ardent and longing affections after Christ, so that as we be ready to faint and swoon through earnest affections after more full and familiar fellowship with him. It was Daniel's case, he was sick of love; so let it be with us for want of God's presence, and pray that God would refresh us with his presence, and send good ministers and good magistrates to be as nursing fathers to his church, Isaiah 49:23.

Use 8. Eighthly, This serves to teach, and straitly to charge the children of God, when they enjoy God's presence and favour in the ministry and magistracy sustaining and comforting them, to take heed of disturbing their peace,

1. By any indiscreet; or,
2. Offensive carriage; for it is,

First, A disturbance to Christ himself; he is stirred up and awaked, as it were, before he please.

Secondly, The roes and hinds of the field, young comers on in religion, are soon scared away by dangers and troubles arising against the church; therefore we should be careful and take heed we provoke not any dog to bark, for then they will be gone. Let us therefore walk wisely and inoffensively, that none be discouraged, that Christ, who doth sustain us and refresh us, may dwell with us for ever.

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'The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills', verse 8, to the end.

In these words are described,

First, The church's deliverance out of captivity; where is laid down,

First, The preparation to the deliverance in the causes of it; which were,

First, The voice of the beloved.

Secondly, The coming of the beloved, and that swiftly:

First, Leaping and skipping.

Secondly, As a young hart or roe, verses 8–9.

Thirdly, His besieging Babel and overcoming it, set forth in three actions:

First, Standing behind the wall.

Secondly, Looking out at the windows.

Thirdly, Showing himself through the lattice, verses 8–9.

Secondly, The calling out of captivity.

First, To go out of Babylon into their own country, verses 10–13; whereunto there are motives:

First, From removal of impediments, verse 11.

Secondly, From store of opportunities, verses 12–13.

Thirdly, To worship God in public meetings in their own country, verse 14.

Secondly, The state of the church returned into their own country, in regard,

First, Of opposition of enemies, verse 15, subtle and ravenous, where is set forth,

First, Their nature; they are foxes, little foxes.

Secondly, The harm they do; they spoil the vines.

Thirdly, There take us the foxes.

Secondly, Of their communion with Christ's outward enemies, and inward abuses restrained, partly, more plentiful and entire.

First, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his'.

Secondly, 'Feedeth amongst the lilies', verse 16.

Secondly, Interrupted, and yet by turns Christ often and speedily visiting and succouring them, and that to the time of the coming of Christ, and the abolishing of the shadows of the ceremonial law, verse 17.

'The voice of my beloved', verse 8. This was the report of Cyrus coming to besiege Babel, and his mustering together of many nations to that service, which rumour was discerned by the faithful to be the accomplishment of the prophecies given them before of deliverance by Cyrus, Isaiah 44:28, and 45:1. And therefore the church, hearing this rumour, suddenly acknowledgeth in it the promise and voice of Christ, Jeremiah 50:42–43,46; and so it was no less grateful to them than doleful and dreadful to the Babylonians.

'He cometh leaping upon the mountains.'

'My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the window, showing himself through the lattice, verse 9.

These words express the great expedition and speed which Cyrus made in his journey against Babel; all the nations lying in the way,

First, Either of themselves setting open their gates to him, as weary of the Babylonian yoke;

Secondly, Or speedily surprised and subdued.

‘He standeth behind the wall.’ Laying siege to the walls of Babylon.

‘He looketh forth at the windows’,—that is, he giveth some glimpse of hope of further enlargement to the church.

‘He showeth himself through the lattice.’ As in the original, any place burned through. In the siege of Babel, Cyrus diverting the course of Euphrates another way, which before came through the midst of the city, burning up the reeds, and drying up the water passages, he showed himself through the place and entered the city, Jeremiah 30:31–32.

‘My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away’, verse 10,—that is, Cyrus made open proclamation for my departure out of Babel, and return into mine own country, Ezra 2:1–4. Though Cyrus was a heathen, and knew not Christ the beloved, yet the church in Cyrus saw the hand and voice of Christ, using Cyrus as an instrument for deliverance, Isaiah 45:4, b; whence Ezra saith, ‘The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus’, Ezra 1:7.

‘For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone’, verse 11.

That is, first, Partly it was now spring-time of the year; the winter and rain were now over, which else might have hindered travel.

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Secondly, The metaphorical winter of Babel’s captivity, and all the storms of it, were blown over; whence it is the Chaldean word is here used to signify this winter, not the common Hebrew word.

‘The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land’, verse 12.

Which, with the words following, is,

First, Partly a description of the spring-time, which invited them to this journey.

Secondly, Partly a setting before them of such conveniences which, like to the springtime, might invite them to this journey.

‘The flowers appear on the earth’; that is, even they of the people of the countries amongst whom they sojourned, they both,

First, Praised God for their deliverance, Psalm 126:1–3.

Secondly, Furnished them with gold and silver, and other useful things, for their journey, Ezra 1:4, 6–8.

‘The time of the singing of birds is come.’ To wit, that the priests and Levites should now sing and praise God in their own countries, which they thought unseasonable to do in a strange land, Psalm 137:3–4.

‘The voice of the turtle is heard in our land’; that is, of Christ the faithful spouse of his church, who is mourning in Judea because he findeth not his mate (the church) there.

‘The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell’, verse 13,—that is, the chief of the fathers and elders of the people, they show themselves forward to countenance the journey, and to prepare for it.

‘Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away’, verse 10, 13. Being twice repeated, it argueth the people were slack to leave their states, which they had planted themselves in at Babel, and therefore stood in need of calling on again and again.

‘O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely’, verse 14.

‘O my dove’; that is, my chaste, innocent, and fair spouse.

‘That art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the stairs.’ That now dost worship me in holes and corners.

‘Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice.’ Let me see thee assembled into the face of a church in my sanctuary, let me there hear thee calling upon me, singing praise to me, speaking my word.

‘For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely.’

First, The voice of the church, at one and the same time,

First, Rejoicing in God’s wonderful mercy.

Secondly, Weeping and bewailing, partly,

First, Their own unworthiness.

Secondly, The decays of the church in regard of former times, Psalm 14:6, 1–3, with Jeremiah 50:4–5; Ezra 3:11–13, 15.

‘Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes’, verse 15; that is, restrain the foxes, the little foxes, the enemies of the church, of greater or less power, such as were the Samaritans, Ezra 4:2–4, and 5, 3; Nehemiah 4:1–3; Esther 3:8–9. These spoiled the vines, hindered the proceeding of the building of the temple, Ezra 4:4–5, 23–24, and the peace of the church. And therefore Tobiah said truly of himself and his fellows, that they, as foxes, going upon the weak foundation of the walls of Jerusalem, might easily demolish the same, Nehemiah 4:3. Yet these foxes in the end were taken and restrained, first, Partly by the edict of Darius, Ezra 6:11, 13; secondly, Partly by the

hanging of Haman and his sons, and the destruction of some other of the Jews' enemies, Hebrews 7:10, and 9:14,16.

'My beloved is mine, and I am his', verse 16. The church enjoyeth familiar and comfortable communion with Christ, these enemies being quelled, Nehemiah 8.

'She feedeth among the lilies'; that is, among pure and fair Christians, all corruptions being weeded out, both of strange wives, Ezra 10, of usury, of right of the Levites' maintenance and ministration, and profanation of the Sabbath, Nehemiah 13.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether', verse 17.

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'Turn, my beloved'; that is, return often to visit and succour me.

'As a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether'; that is, swiftly and speedily, Bether being near to them on the other side Jordan, 2 Samuel 2:29; as who should say, though thou sometime turn from us, yet be not far, but ready ever and anon to return and succour us.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away'; that is, till Christ come, and the ceremonial shadows vanish.

Use 1. First, This teacheth us that in all the instruments of the church's deliverance we should see and discern Christ speaking and working in them; see here the church looks not at Cyrus so much, but at Christ in him. Do they hear a rumour of a deliverance? Is it the voice of Christ? and it must needs be a strong voice which Christ is the author of. The wisest Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they say it is Christ, and all the rest yield; and the church sees Christ come skipping. Doth it see Cyrus about the walls? She sees Christ there. Doth she see Cyrus showing himself through the lattice? She sees Christ there. Doth she see when he is possessed there, and makes proclamation to them to go up again to Jerusalem? She looks at it as Christ's voice, saying, 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away', verse 13.

So the Holy Ghost teacheth, what favour any doth show to the church, it is Christ that doth it; so take it, that if any good befall the church it is Christ that doth it; if any lead into captivity, Nebuchadnezzar or any other, it is Christ that leads her into a wine-cellar; if there be any noise or work of deliverance, it is Christ that comes leaping and skipping; so in all the calamities, and in all the blessings that befall the church, ascribe

all to Christ. The same hand that gave, the same hand hath taken away, Job 1:21, and 42:10; God turned the captivity of Job, and God turned again the captivity of his people, Psalm 12:6, 11. This is a wonderful stay to God's church, and to every member of it; for man cannot bring it into captivity and bring it out again; man's hand cannot bring hard things upon the church, nor bring her out again of them; for if it were in men's hands, or in Satan's, or in our own hands, it would not go well with us; but being

in Christ's hands alone, it may be a stay and a comfort .

Use 2. Secondly, This teacheth us that when the time of the church's deliverance is come, Christ will come quickly and speedily for her deliverance, leaping and skipping as a roe or a hart. The winter shall not always remain on the church; no, not when she deserves a black winter. 'The patient abiding of the saints shall not always be forgotten', Psalm 9:18. Suppose God leads his church into captivity seven years, yea, seventy years, yet it will not always continue. This may serve to comfort us in the distresses of the church at home or abroad. God will not always punish with reproach or desolation, but the time will come these will be gone and flee away.

Use 3. Thirdly, This lets us see the church profiteth by calamities; she comes out better from them than she went into them; she entered and went into captivity hating God, defiled with many abominations; she returns out 'My love, my fair one'. The church of God, and the members of it, are more lovely in God's sight by the hard times that pass over them. When this church had been seventy years in captivity—a hard time it was—yet they lost nothing by it; they kissed his rod, and sought God, Jeremiah 12:7, 8; and now he styles them lovely.

He loathed them because they loathed him; they were now tried and purified. Before they were loathsome, but now are lovely; before hated, but now loved. But see what a blessed use chastisements are of to the church: how loathsome soever we go into captivity, when we defile ourselves with lusts and sins, yet when we have been thoroughly humbled with some crosses, how fair come we out! 'My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction', Proverbs 3:11. And why doth God say, Deuteronomy 8:16, he proved them to do them good? when he saith *my love*, it is more than lovely; it is love, it is love itself; and *fair one* is more than fair. So, 'It is good for me', saith David,

'that I have been afflicted', Psalm 119:71. So the church before her affliction was loathsome, foul, hated; but now she is fair and lovely.

'Thou art fair, O my love.'

Use 4. Fourthly, This lets us see the church's winter storms shall not always lie upon her, but

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they shall in the end blow over. 'The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous'. Psalm. 125:3.

Use 5. Fifthly, We may see that outward comforts are easily able to drown in us a longing after God's ordinances. The contentment that some found in captivity made them stand in need of often calling to return to Zion.

Use 6. Sixthly, We may learn here that the face of the church is not always visible and conspicuous in the eyes of men, but always in the eyes of God; for they meet under the stairs, and worship God in holes and corners. And a while after Christ saith, Why dost thou lie thus under the stairs and in clefts of rocks? Let me see thy face and hear thy voice. The church of Rome advanceth herself, that she hath always been conspicuous. But this is no true sign of a true church, for the true church is not always conspicuous: though Christ always sees some to meet in corners and holes, yet not always in solemn assemblies. The dove of Christ Jesus sometimes makes her rest in the rocks, and builds under the stairs, where Christ sees her, but not publicly,

Use 7. Seventhly, See here the church needs not angels and saints to mediate for her; her own voice is sweet, and countenance comely, in God's estimation, verse 14. 'At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not to you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me', John 16:26-27. Christ tells us he shall have no great need to pray for us, for God himself loveth us, to hear our voice, and to see us. Let us then not be afraid to put forth our voices. Labour then for such a spirit as to grieve for our sins, and to rejoice in God's mercies, for God is pleased with that. He is a true citizen of Zion, that when he abounds in God's mercies, yet he weeps for his sins; and when he weeps for his sins, yet he is thankful for God's mercies.

Use 8. Again, observe, the church shall always be troubled with some enemies: 'Take us the foxes that spoil the vines', verse 16. There shall be ever some Sanballat, or Tobiah, or some other, to be nibbling at the church

of God. Wonder not at this, for this will be so. But observe, touching these enemies of the church,

First, They shall deal subtly and craftily with her.

Secondly, They may disturb and hinder her peace and proceedings.

But,

Thirdly, They shall in the end be restrained, as in Revelation 19:20, 'And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, &c. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.' Therefore let such foxes know the time will come when Christ will either take them, and chain them and bind them up, as he did Sanballat, Tobiah, Shetharboznai, Ezra 6:6-7, or else hang them up, as he did Haman and his sons. Let men then take heed that they do not push at the church, for God will either chain them up, or hang them out of the way.

Use 9. Lastly, Here we may see, when the enemies of the church are restrained or destroyed, and corruptions weeded out of it, the church then enjoyeth sweet, and safe, and full fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and he with her. He gives her pledges of his favour, and she gives him pledges of pure worshipping him. He feeds them with his ordinances, they him with their sacrifices. And they that would procure Christ this, let them provide for weeding out of their sins, as usury, wicked marriages, profanations of God's sabbaths, &c. Such churches shall be sweet, and much sweet solace shall they enjoy one with another, Christ with them, and they with him.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEXT.

Verse 1. By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but found him not.

Verse 2. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

Verse 3. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

Verse 4. It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

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Verse 5. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

Verse 6. Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant?

Verse 7. Behold his bed, which is Solomon's: three score valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.

Verse 8. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

Verse 9. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.

Verse 10. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.

Verse 11. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

THE EXPLANATION.

Verse 1. By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but found him not, &c.

This chapter setteth forth the estate of the church from after the days of Nehemiah to the time of Christ's sojourning here on earth in a twofold period:

First, Under the Maccabees, verse 1–6.

Secondly, In John Baptist's time, verse 6–11.

The state of the church in the Maccabees' time was partly full of calamities, as a time of darkness: 'By night I sought him', verse 1; and partly sweetened with some more comfortable issue.

This calamity is set forth,
 First, By resemblance to night: 'By night I sought him.'
 Secondly, By the absence of Christ, whom she sought in vain, verse 2.
 First, In her bed, verse 1.
 Secondly, In the streets of the city, verse 2.
 Thirdly, Amongst the watchmen, verse 3.
 The comfortable issue of her seeking Christ is set forth,
 First, By her finding of him, verse 4.
 Secondly, By her holding of him, verse 4.

Thirdly, By her bringing of him into her

mother's house, verse 4.

Fourthly, By her charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, to walk circumspectly, that this estate be not interrupted, verse 5.

'By night', verse 1; that is, in time of darkness and public calamity, when Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn, waxed exceeding great, wasted the pleasant land, cast some of the host and stars of heaven to the ground; when he took away the daily sacrifice, and trode down the sanctuary, and cast down the truth to the ground, Daniel 8:9–12; when he robbed the temple, murdered the people, spoiled the city, made laws for profaning the Sabbath, for offering swine's flesh, for neglecting circumcision; when he set up the statues of Jupiter Olympus, the abomination of desolation, in the holy place; when he burnt the books of the law, and made it death to have a Testament; when he brake down the altar and set up another; when he put women to death who had caused children to be circumcised, and hanged children upon the necks of their mothers, 1 Maccabees 1:23, to the end.

'In my bed.' Not in my bed of ease and sloth, as some take it, for what ease could the church take in the night-time of calamity? But in my bed, chapter 1:16, and 3:7, that is, in the place and duties of God's worship, the temple and the ordinances.

'I sought him whom my soul loveth'; I desired and endeavoured to have fellowship with Christ; 'but I found him not', the sanctuary being polluted, and the daily sacrifice taken away, and profane idols set up in the place.

'In the streets of the city', verse 2; that is, in the open assemblies of the faithful, in the synagogues, in the cities of Judea and Jerusalem; but behold there altars erected to idols, and incense burned, and the books of the

law cast into the fire, 1 Maccabees 1:57–59; yea, behold the citizens of Jerusalem all fled and gone, 1 Maccabees 1:40; and the rest went in procession to Bacchus, 2 Maccabees 6:7.

‘The watchmen that go about the city’, verse 3—to wit, the Levites, who answered her with silence; but a little after she found succour at Modin, for the priests, Mattathias and his sons, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, and the rest that went about to repair the ruins of the church and commonwealth, to these

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the faithful church repairing, and finding deliverance and comfort, 1 Maccabees 2:42–43, by Judas especially, or rather by Christ in him, 1 Maccabees 3:5–8, she left him not till she had brought him into the temple, where she soon after cleansed the sanctuary, and restored the purity of God’s worship, and offered sacrifice according to the law, so that she found great comfort and joy in the duties of God’s worship, 1 Maccabees 4:42,46. Thus again found they Christ in a typical saviour, held him by faith, and, with courage and zeal, brought him into the temple and sanctuary, the house and chamber of her mother,—that is, of the former church of Israel, or of the Catholic church, for the church of the former ages is the mother of the latter; or the whole church is the mother of each part, in usual phrase of Hebrew speech. The temple is the house of both; the sanctuary is the chamber of her that bare her.

‘I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please’, verse 5.

‘I charge you’, &c. See the same words opened, chapter 2:7. The church chargeth all her daughters, all her members, to take heed, lest by their indiscreet dealing, or any wicked practice, they stir up the neighbour princes of Syria and Egypt, not to disturb the peace of the church, and to provoke Christ again to leave them desolate; which, though Jason and Menelaus and Alcimus broke, 2 Maccabees 14:14, yet they prevailed not so far, but Christ was still found in the temple of the faithful till his coming in the flesh.

‘Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?’ verse 6.

‘Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?’ This is a description of John Baptist, and of the church gathered by his ministry in the wilderness; which is set forth,

First, By the admiration and inquisitiveness of the old synagogue after him and his baptism: ‘Who is this that cometh’, or ariseth, &c., which was fulfilled, John 1:19; Luke 3:15; to whom the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? and all men mused whether he were not the Christ.

Secondly, By the place of his arising, and the

church with him: in the wilderness, Luke 3:2–4; Mark 1:3–4.

Thirdly, By the manner of arising: like pillars of smoke, which,

First, Ariseth from fire, as the church arose from zeal and fervency of John’s ministry.

Secondly, Ascendeth on high, as the propagation of this church did, even to Jerusalem, Matthew 3:5–6.

Thirdly, Fills the country, as the church did, with rumour and increase of it, Matthew 3:5–6.

Fourthly, By the excellent fragrancy and sweetness of the graces thereof perfumed, chapter 1:13, preserving from putrefaction. Such was the powerful zeal of John and his ministry, strongly fragrant as myrrh, and preserving his hearers from Pharisaical hypocrisy, Matthew 3:7–10. Frankincense is of like strong fragrancy, and of chief use in making of the holy incense, Exodus 30:34; by which prayer was signified, Psalm 141:2, to intimate the fragrancy and fervency of his prayers who taught all his disciples to pray, Luke 11:1.

‘With all powders of the merchant’; to wit, perfumed with the sweet graces of God, filled with the Holy Ghost above all prophets, Luke 1:15, yea, above all that were born of women, Matthew 11:9–11; whence also he seasoned all sorts of his hearers with graces and directions fit for their several callings, Luke 3:10–14.

Fifthly, By the doctrine of John, who expressly preached the Lord Jesus manifested in the flesh.

‘Behold his bed, which is Solomon’s; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel’, verse 7.

‘Behold his bed, which is Solomon’s.’ This doctrine the church of that time received and believed. In which doctrine that first church first discerned and believed,

First, The temple of Christ's body; for the bed was taken, chapter 1:16, and 3:1, as also it is here, for the temple, which was the type of Christ's body, John 2:19–20.

Now this, as John pointed, John 1:29–30, 'Behold the Lamb of God', as here it is said, 'Behold his bed'. This temple it is the temple of Solomon, of Christ; in him the Godhead dwelleth bodily, Colossians 2:9.

Secondly, The guard of angels attending it, to

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prevent the fear of Herod's enmity and others, John 1:51; Matthew 2:13–19.

Thirdly, The maker of his humanity, verse 9. King Solomon made himself a couch; the word may be translated coach or couch. This latter I rather take, partly for the etymology of Apirion, fol. 38, to be fruitful as the bride's bed is, and partly for agreement with the former word bed, verse 7.

No earthly father, but Christ by his own Spirit, made his own body and his own bed in his mother's womb, Luke 1:35.

Fourthly, The matter of it: the wood of Lebanon; for the virgin Mary dwelt in Nazareth of Galilee, at the foot of Lebanon.

As Solomon's temple, the type of Christ's body, was made of the wood of Lebanon, the cedar which is free from corruption, Hosea 1, so was the body of Christ sound from seeing corruption, Psalm 16:10.

Fifthly, The ornaments of it; which were,

First, Partly his offices:

1. Priestly, as pillars of silver abiding the fire of God's wrath, and pure as silver tried in the fire, Hebrews 7:26.
2. Prophetical, delivering us a word precious as gold, even as fine gold, Psalm 19:10.
3. Kingly, whence it is said, verse 10, 'The covering of it of purple, the royal ornament of kings.

Secondly, Partly the affection wherein he undertook and executed these offices: love of the daughters of Jerusalem, verse 10. All these John declareth, John 3:29, to the end.

Secondly, He exhorteth and stirreth up the faithful to behold,

First, Christ, John 1:29, to end.

Secondly, The ornaments wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, verse 11. The day of his espousals was the day when God the Father contracted him with the church, Matthew 3:13; whence

after he is called the bridegroom, John 3:29, and John the bridegroom's friend, his disciples the children of the bride-chamber. And the church henceforward in this book is called the spouse, not before. The crown wherewith his mother crowned him is the testimony of Christ's sovereignty, which John and the faithful gave him, John 1:33-35, 49, and 3:29-36.

First, Of the estate of the church under the Maccabees.

Use 1. First, This doth teach us with what intent we are to come before God in the public assemblies, namely, to seek Christ, the love of our souls; not to show our fine garments, want only to gaze at beauties; not to satisfy the law or friends for fashion's sake, but to seek Christ, instructing us in temptations. Some come to catch something from Christ to entrap him, &c., but it is our duty to come unto him, as a spouse to her husband, for seed. So we must come to Christ that he may cast the seeds of grace into our souls, that we may bring forth fruit unto him.

Use 2. Secondly, This lets us see the changeable estate of the church; she that rejoiced in the presence and fellowship of Christ, and could say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his', chapter 2:16, now seeks him everywhere, and with much difficulty and anguish, verse 1-3. And so it is oft with every true member of the church, as we may see it was with David, Psalm 119:25, and 6-8; so it is now with our brethren beyond the seas, whom you might have commended a year or two ago, and have found Christ there. But now he is gone; she seeks him, but finds him not. See the church of God sometime enjoys all the ordinances of God, sometimes none; so a Christian soul sometimes hath Christ's left hand under her head, and his right hand to embrace her, Canticles 2:6, soon after she finds him not so. We must not condemn the church for this; for they that are tenderly beloved of Christ may sometimes seek him, and not find him.

Use 3. Thirdly, This may comfort such as seek Christ in all his ordinances: they shall either find him in them, or, after the use of them, in some unexpected or extraordinary help. The church here that found not Christ in the temple, nor in the assemblies and recourse of Christian people, nor in conference with the priests, found him soon after in an unexpected and extraordinary help, even Judas Maccabeus, verse 4; for indeed it was extraordinary for the tribe of Levi to take up the sword and sceptre, which indeed belonged to Judah: so you see, when ordinary means fail, God will be found in extraordinary. Whosoever then would find Christ, and seek him everywhere, they shall surely find him, either in his ordinances or out of them.

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Use 4. Fourthly, This lets us see the affectionate cleaving of such to Christ, as have long sought him and not found him till at last; such lay hold on him, and will not let him go, verse 4, which is one reason why Christ sometimes hides himself from us, that we might seek him the more diligently, and, having found him, cleave to him more steadfastly; and this God looks for at the hands of his.

Use 5. Fifthly, This doth exhort Christians that live among bad neighbours to walk the more circumspectly, as the daughters of Jerusalem are here charged upon oath to do, verse 5, being between the Syrians and Egyptians. It is a charge given by the church to her daughters to take heed they stir not up her love, nor awake Christ till he please.

Two reasons are given for it:

First, It may provoke Christ to bring another estate upon the church which will not be good for it.

Secondly, In regard of fearful Christians, for they will start away. Many are willing to come into the church, but if the profession of Christ be troublesome and hot, they will not abide it; therefore this charge is needful that we may walk holily, that Christ be not stirred up, nor these fearful Christians discouraged. See this handled, chapter 2 verse 7.

Thus far the first part in the time of the Maccabees. Now,

Secondly, Of the estate of the church in John Baptist's time.

Use 1. This is, first, To show us that God can raise up a church even in the wilderness, verse 6, to the admiration of observers; and so he can raise up our neighbour churches, now brought to a wilderness. This may comfort us in regard of them; for though they be now desolate, yet we may hope a time will come when they shall rise again.

Use 2. Secondly, See here is a part of the duty of ancient Christians, not to malign the graces of God in those that come after them, but to admire them. 'Who is it that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,' &c., verse 6.

Use 3. Thirdly, This shows what gifts and graces are most requisite in a minister, and do most adorn him, even zeal in his ministry and fervency in prayer, and all sorts of sweet graces to season and direct all

sorts of his people in their several callings, verse 6, as John did, when the people came and said, 'What shall we do? He answered and said, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none,' &c., Luke 3:10-14. So John was perfumed with graces for all men; for men must

not come into the ministry with judgment and learning alone, for these may come from nature; but they must come perfumed with graces, to keep themselves and others from putrefaction; yea, they must labour for those graces which will give a strong scent to save themselves and others.

Use 4. Fourthly, This shows us the manhood and godhead of Christ. Christ's human nature is the temple or bed wherein the Godhead resteth bodily; and the Godhead made this temple or bed for himself, no earthly father for him, verse 7,9.

Use 5. Fifthly, See here the protection and guardiance the angels give to Christ, and in him to the church and all his members, verse 7-8; Psalm 91:11-12, and 34:7; 2 Kings 6:16-17; Hebrews 1:14; Revelation 5:11, and 7:11.

Use 6. Sixthly, We may here see in Christ whatsoever is behoveful for all our salvations. In regard of his priestly office, he is pure as silver, to cleanse our impurity, and to abide the fire. In regard of his prophetic office, he is precious as gold, to enrich our poverty. In regard of his royal and kingly office, he is glorious as purple, and clothed with it, to advance our baseness, verse 10. His heart or midst is even paved with love of us. His heart is a hearth, for so the word signifieth, whereon the fire of his love towards us burneth continually. Let us then love the Lord Jesus again, and receive the seeds and fruits of his grace, and then shall we see his heart flaming with love to us; and then whatsoever befalls, bloodshed, war, captivity, &c., all comes from love; his whole heart is paved with love.

Use 7. Seventhly, Let us take up our thoughts and meditations about Christ; let us go forth and behold him; let his abundant graces fill our empty souls.

Use 8. Eighthly, If thou beest a daughter of Zion, thou art contracted to Christ, and know it by this: Dost thou read his letters? art thou delighted with them? and dost thou rejoice to speak to him again by prayer? If thou dost, it may be the joy of thy heart, for thy estate is good.

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Use 9. Lastly, This doth exhort us all to give up ourselves as spouses to Christ, and that with all gladness of heart, since he is affected to us, who yet hath nothing from us but debts and beggary; and they that do give themselves up to Christ need not fear wanting comfort, for no spouses shall find such comfort as they. Shall he be glad to have us, a company of beggars—yea, as I may say, a company of deaths? And was it the gladness

of his heart to be espoused to us, which was when his Father contracted him to us, and shall we think it a day of deading to set our feet into Christ's bed? All the merchants cannot set forth our excellency when he shall pay all our debts, and adorn us with all his graces. Therefore let us go forth, and bring him home to us; we shall then find him comfortable to us in the day of espousals.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEXT.

Verse 1. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

Verse 2. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

Verse 3. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.

Verse 4. Thy neck is like to the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

Verse 5. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

Verse 6. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

Verse 7. Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

Verse 8. Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

Verse 9. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my

spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

Verse 10. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse; how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thy ointments than all spices!

Verse 11. Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is the the smell of Lebanon.

Verse 12. A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

Verse 13. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,

Verse 14. Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloe, with all the chief spices:

Verse 15. A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

Verse 16. A wake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

THE EXPLANATION.

Verse 1–6. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead, &c.

This chapter describes the estate of the church in her periods:

First, In Christ's time, under his ministry, verse 1–6.

Secondly, After his ascension, under the apostles, verse 7–11.

Thirdly, After their departure, during the first ten persecutions, verse 12–16.

The church in Christ's time is commended and described,

First, By her beauty in general: 'Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair.'

Secondly, The beauty of her several parts, at that time most conspicuous; as,

First, Of her eyes, verse 1.

Secondly, Of her hair, verse 1.

Thirdly, Of her teeth, verse 2.

Fourthly, Of her lips, verse 3.

Fifthly, Of her temples, verse 3.

Sixthly, Of her neck, verse 4.

Seventhly, Of her breasts, verse 5.

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Secondly, The death of Christ falling out in her time, verse 6.

‘Behold, thou art fair.’ Fair twice repeated implies, by a usual Hebraism, that she was very fair; and beloved twice repeated argues her eminent beauty was very conspicuous. Such was the estate of the church gathered by his ministry and flocking after him.

First, It was fair and beautiful, partly in her flocking after him, Matthew 4:25.

Secondly, Leaving all to follow him, hanging upon his mouth, and wondering at the gracious words and deeds coming from him, Matthew 19:19, 27; Luke 19:48, and 9:43.

Secondly, In his both,

First, Presence with her, as her light, John 3:29, and 12:35.

Secondly, Decking of her by his ministry.

This beauty of the church was well known, yet ought to have been better observed:

First of all, By the children of wisdom, Matthew 11:10.

Secondly, Of all the Greeks, John 12:20–21, even strangers of the pharisees and elders, John 12:19.

‘Thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks.’ Doves, as before, chapter 1:15, are noted,

First, For their chasteness.

Secondly, Loathing of uncleanness; but there is withal in their eyes,

1. Cleanness.

2. Simplicity.

This implies that the church at that time,

First, Saw more clearly sundry truths about Christ than the fathers had done, Luke 10:23–25, or the present governors, John 9:39.

Secondly, Was of a simple and innocent look and demeanour, Matthew 10:16; John 1:47.

Thirdly, Looked with a chaste eye after Christ alone, John 6:68.

Fourthly, Loathed the uncleanness of pharisaical superstitions, Matthew 15:1–2.

'Within thy locks.' For their knowledge, though clear in many things, yet perceived not sundry plain points; as,

First, The death and resurrection of Christ, Luke 18:32-34.

Secondly, The leaven of the pharisees, Matthew 8:15; Luke 12:1; Matthew 16:6.

As the eye within locks of hair is hindered from discerning things lying open before it.

'Thy hair as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead.'

Hair, though it hang long upon the head, yet it may in time either,

First, Fall of itself.

Secondly, Be cut off. So were the common Christians of that time, as it were, hair,

1. For multitude.

2. Hanging on Christ, the head.

3. Falling many of them from him:

First, Either of themselves, John 6:66; or,

Secondly, Cut off by the practices of the priests, Matthew 27:20; John 12:42-43. Hence it was that Jesus durst not commit himself to them, John 2:23-95.

'As a flock of goats.' Which are wont,

First, To assemble themselves in companies. So did the people gather after Christ.

Secondly, To be without a shepherd, as this people were, Matthew 9:36.

Thirdly, To feed afar off, and that somewhat dangerously, upon rocks.

So the people came from far to hear Christ, Mark 8:3, and were in danger for feeding on him, John 9:22.

'Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them', verse 2.

The sheep whereto these teeth are likened are set forth,

First, By their even-shornness.

Secondly, By their cleanness, coming up from the washing.

Thirdly, By their fruitfulness: every one bringeth forth twins, none barren.

First, Even set, none gaping out.

Secondly, White and clean.

Thirdly, Each answering to his fellow in the other jaw; none wanting, as it is a praise to the teeth to be. The teeth are such as chew the meat,

and prepare it for the rest of the body. Such in that church were the apostles, whom our Saviour calls a little flock, Luke 12:32. They were all, First, Even set, and even shorn, none bursting

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out beyond his fellows. Peter's supremacy stretched not beyond the rest of the apostles, Matthew 16:19, compared with John 20:23; Matthew 18:18, and 20:20,25; Mark 10:40,42; Luke 22:24-25.

The teeth of innocent sheep are even set. They that have tusks longer than the other teeth are hurtful and ravenous beasts, as dogs, bears, lions, &c. Ten of the apostles disdained the motion of supremacy.

Secondly, Came up from John's baptism; and therefore, when Judas fell away, they must needs supply his place out of the number of such as had continued with them from John's baptism, Acts 1:21-22.

Secondly, They were suitable each one to his fellow, and therefore the seventy were sent out by couples, Luke 10:1.

But especially they were fruitful in bringing home many lambs to Christ, and hence the seventy returned with joy to Christ, Luke 10:17-18; and Satan is said to fall down from heaven before them like lightning.

'Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks', verse 3.

'Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely.' Both signifying the deliverance or utterance of the doctrine of the church at that time, which was,

First, As a thread, slender (*tenui filo*), not plump or swelling with human eloquence, but savouring of fisher-like tenuity and simplicity.

Secondly, As a thread of scarlet; for as scarlet or purple is a princely and royal wear, so their doctrine was,

First, Touching the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 10:7.

Secondly, Though tender, yet deeply dyed in grain with royal majesty and authority of the Spirit of God.

'Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.' Temples of tile head are they by which the whole body watcheth or resteth; they are such, therefore, as watch over the body, and for it.

The pomegranate was of much use in the old tabernacle and temple. Aaron's coat was hanged with pomegranates and bells, Exodus 28:34—bells for sound of doctrine and prayer, pomegranates for restraining

and healing the distempers and diseases of the people. Pomegranates are commended by Fernelius,¹

First, For repressing the heat of choler.

2. The malignity, rottenness, and acrimony of fevers.

3. The looseness of the belly.

Secondly, For comforting and strengthening the stomach and bowels, to the keeping back all fainting.² This office the ecclesiastical governors of the church do perform to it. They repress the heat of fallings out among brethren, the notorious abuses, the looseness or distemperedness of the people; they comfort the feeble and bind up the weak, and are therefore fitly resembled by pomegranates, yea, by a piece of a pomegranate, for it is not the whole body of the pomegranate that doth this, but it, broken in pieces, by his juice and rind is medicinal.

‘Within thy locks.’ Because though Christ established discipline, and delivered it to the church in his time, Matthew 18:15–17, yet it was not displayed, nor showed itself in open execution, till after his resurrection, 1 Corinthians 5:1–6.

‘Thy neck is like the tower of David’, &c., verse 4. The neck is that part that joineth head and body together; now that which joineth Christ and his church together is our faith: which faith in some of the members of that church in Christ’s time was observed to be strong and great, Matthew 8:10, and 15:28; and therefore is here fitly compared to the tower of David, for an armoury, whereof we read, Nehemiah 9:25, 26, ‘whereon there hanged a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men’. It seems David’s mighty men hanged up their shields in this armoury against times of war; and so in like manner all the worthies of Israel, all the faithful before Christ, hanged their shields of faith upon Christ, in whom the faith of his church was as a strong armoury, Hebrews 11:13. Faith is not so much a tower of strength in itself, as in Christ, whom it apprehendeth.

‘Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies, verse 5.

‘Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.’ The breasts give milk: now the breasts

¹ Fernelius, p. 26.

² Fernel. Method. Medend., lib. v. cap. 3.

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that give milk to the church, the sincere milk of the word, 2 Peter 2:2, are the ministers, which in the church of Christ's time were first the apostles; secondly, the seventy; and are therefore here called two breasts, and both as roes, because not tied to any certain place within all the people of the Jews; for roes stay not long in a place. And both as twins, because of equal commission, being both sent alike to the whole house of Israel, though, after the resurrection, the apostles' commission was enlarged further than that of the seventy.

'Which feed among the lilies.' For they were sent not only among the Gentiles or Samaritans, but amongst,

First, The lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matthew 10.

Secondly, The true-hearted or well-affected of the Israelites, Matthew 10:11.

These faithful are here compared to the lilies,

First, For their whiteness and purity of innocence.

Secondly, For their amiableness.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense', verse 6.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away'; that is, until the light of the gospel break forth, and the shadows of the Mosaical ceremonies vanish.

'I will get me to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense'; that is, to the mounts,

First, Of Olivet; secondly, Of Golgotha, where he suffered in the garden and on the cross, and nailed to his cross all the shadows of the law, and, in fulfilling them, abolished them, Colossians 2:14.

Myrrh and frankincense are wont to be used in embalming, and with suchlike Christ himself at his death was to have been embalmed, if his resurrection had not prevented the women, John 19:39-40; Luke 23:46. Besides, the passion of Christ was a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour to God, and therefore the place thereof is fitly called the mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense; though otherwise the mountain of myrrh may well be mount Calvary, or Golgotha, the place of his death; and the hill of frankincense mount Olivet, in regard of his ascension into heaven; yea, even heaven itself, whither he ascended, may be well called the hill of frankincense for sweetness.

Use 1. This, first, doth teach us that a church may be beautiful in God's sight, though consisting,

First, Of mean persons,

Secondly, Of such as were sometimes notorious offenders, as publicans and harlots: and from hence,

First, Poor people,

Secondly, sinners, yea, ugly sinners, are to be exhorted to repentance and seeking after Christ: it makes them truly amiable in Christ's eyes, though otherwise in themselves never so mean and foul.

From hence also poor sinners may take comfort; though loaden with the sense of their deformities, they in Christ's eyes are very beautiful.

From hence also the Separatists may learn that, notwithstanding many abuses in their teachers, or others of the church, as the scribes and pharisees, whom the people were to hear, Matthew 23:23, yet the church may be denominated from the better part very fair, as a heap of wheat, though covered over with abundance of chaff.

Use 2. Secondly, This may teach ministers how to frame themselves to be amiable in God's sight, viz.:

First, By carrying themselves evenly with their brethren.

Secondly, By cleansing their hearts and lives by the power of baptism.

Thirdly, By fruitfulness, and faithfulness in their ministry.

Fourthly, By not affecting carnal eloquence, but gracious and deep-dyed powerful utterance; for swelling words of human wisdom make men's preaching seem to Christ, as it were, a blubber lipped ministry.

Fifthly, By restraining abuses and offences amongst the people, and strengthening and comforting the feeble-minded.

Sixthly, By feeding their people with sincere milk, 1 Peter 2:2, and not being dry nurses.

Seventhly, By taking most delight in conversing among lilies, their well-affected people, though seeking also to win all; and therefore sometimes conversing with them as the physicians among the sick.

Use 3. This may teach ecclesiastical governors their office in the former virtues of the pomegranate, verse 3, to repress the heat of abuses; the looseness and distemperedness of the people, to comfort the feeble, and bind up the weak, &c.

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Fourthly, This may teach the people how to approve themselves to Christ, in looking after Christ in knowledge, simplicity, chastity of spirit, loathing superstitions, and places of bad resort.

Aspicias ut veniunt ad candida tecta Columbae.

Thou seest how pigeons take their flight,
To houses that be fair and white.

For what should Christians do in filthy taverns, ale-houses, stews, &c.? in strength of faith rooting and building themselves upon Christ.

‘Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee’, verse 7–11. In these words we have a description of the estate of the church soon after Christ’s ascension, gathered and built up by the ministry of the apostles, which they call the apostolic or primitive church.

This church is here set forth,

First, By her complete beauty, her full fairness, verse 7.

Secondly, By Christ’s calling her to behold the calling of the Gentiles, verse 8.

Thirdly, By the ravishing beauty of a sister church at that time:

1. In one of her eyes, verse 9; 2. One chain of her neck, verse 9.

Fourthly, By her love, which is set forth,

1. By the fairness of it, verse 10; 2. By the sweetness of it above wine, verse 10.

Fifthly, By the flowingness, sweetness, and wholesomeness of her doctrine, verse 11.

Sixthly, By the smell of her garments, like that of Lebanon, verse 11.

‘Thou art fair.’ The fairness of the church was acknowledged before, but never till now the perfect fairness. All complete fairness or beauty standeth in these three things:

First, In the integrity of all the parts and members of the body; for if any be wanting, it is a maimed, a blemished body.

Secondly, In the symmetry or fit proportion of all the members one to another.

Thirdly, In the good complexion or colour of them all. Look what parts are requisite for the complete integrity of a fair church; they are all found in the apostolic church, in comely proportion of beauty; for look,

First, At their doctrine, and it was,

1. Free from all error, so far as it was dispensed by the apostles, prophets, evangelists of that time, Acts 28:22, 23, who likewise suffered no weeds of false doctrine to grow under them, Revelation 2:2.

2. Their doctrine was complete, even the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:27.

3. It was dispensed in powerful simplicity, 1 Corinthians 2:4; Acts 2:37, 44, and 4:4.

Secondly, Look at their worship, and you may see,

1. The purity of God's ordinances, without mixture of human inventions, 1 Corinthians 11:23, 34, and 14:26, 48.

2. Order, decency, edification of all aimed at in all the duties administered.

3. Fervency and frequency in prayer and fasting, Acts 4:31, 13:1-3, and 14:23.

Thirdly, Look at their Christian communion, and you may see,

1. Their unity one with another, Acts 4:32.

2. Love and large-heartedness one towards another, Acts 4:32, especially to their ministers, Galatians 4:14-15.

Fourthly, Look to their discipline, and you may see the apostles, prophets, evangelists, presbyters, pastors, teachers, first, Teaching; secondly, Exhorting; thirdly, Ruling: and all by, first, Preaching; secondly, Writing; thirdly, Private conference; fourthly, Good examples. (No churches unprovided of presbyters, in the plural number, Acts 14:23.)

Thirdly, The deacons providing for the poor, Acts 6:3-6.

Fourthly, Both sorts chosen by the church, Acts 6:3, 5.

Fifthly, Excommunications dispensed upon weighty occasions, and with great reverence, and with good success, 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, with 2 Corinthians 2:6-8.

Sixthly, Synods imposing no other but necessary things, either in themselves, or for the present use of the church, Acts 15:26.

This comely frame and order of the church Paul beholding, joyed in it, Colossians 2:5. The church was now called a spouse, after Christ had taken our nature upon him.

'Come with me from Lebanon (my spouse), with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards,' verse 8.

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‘Come with me from Lebanon.’ It is a famous hill in the uttermost border of Israel northward; Amana, a hill more northward, on the west of Syria, looking into Syria, Mesopotamia, Cilicia, and all Asia the less.

‘Hermon and Shenir.’ Two names of the same hill, though happily given to divers parts, called also Syrion or Sien, Deuteronomy 3:9, and 4:48.

‘The lions’ dens and mountains of the leopards.’ Jerusalem and the temple in our Saviour’s time was made a den of thieves and robbers, Matthew 21:13, and 12:17; Luke 19:46; but in the apostles’ time, after the ascension, the rulers grew more fierce and cruel, spilling the blood of Stephen, and making havoc of the church: so then, in this verse, Christ calls his church of the Christian Jews,

First, To behold from Lebanon, Hermon, Amana, the church of the Gentiles gathered in Antioch, Phenice, Cyrene, Cyprus, etc.

Secondly, To come out from those dens of ravenous persecutors at Jerusalem, and to prepare herself to dwell among the Gentiles. Upon the persecution of Stephen the faithful wandered into these parts, and preached the gospel, partly to the Jews, and after to the Gentiles also, Acts 11:18–20; whereupon great numbers of the Gentiles believed, Acts 11:21; which when tidings thereof came to Jerusalem, it was as the voice of Christ calling the church of Jerusalem to send Barnabas to them, to see the churches there and to establish them, verse 22–24. Afterwards, when the church of the Gentiles increased in number and grace, and the Jews increased and grew up in blasphemy and rage against the gospel, Christ called his church at Jerusalem to leave those dens and mountains of lions and leopards, Acts 22:21, and 13:46.

‘My sister’, verse 9. This implieth that Christ now speaketh, not to the mother church of the Jews, but to a sister church, the church of the Gentiles; such a sister as is also a spouse, a true church, now first called a sister by reason of the accession of the church of the Gentiles.

‘Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.’

‘Thou hast ravished my heart, thou hast ravished my heart.’ This implies that Christ was overcome exceedingly with the love of the church; for such

repetitions imply, in the Hebrew phrase, a superlative excellency.

This church so affecting Christ was Antioch, the first church of the Gentiles, seated between Amana and Lebanon; for Barnabas, seeing the

grace of God upon them, was not a little glad of it, so that his spirit was stirred up to exhort them to continue and grow up, Acts 11:23–24; yea, he went out and sought Saul, to bring him among them, verses 25–26; and they both spent a whole year there, and did win much people, so that that church was first called Christian, they first had their husband's name, the name of Christ, first put upon them, for the forwardness of his love to them, and theirs to him.

'With one of thy eyes.' The eyes of the church are several, according as the church may be severally considered; for if the church be considered as assembled together to public duties, so the ministers of the church are the eyes, amongst whom they at Antioch excelled, as Agabus and others, Acts 11:27–28, and 13:1; among whom the Lord was especially delighted with Barnabas and Saul, who were sent immediately by the Spirit of Christ to enlighten all the neighbour countries, Acts 13:2, to 14:27. So they two, joined in one office, were as one eye to enlighten all the parts. But if the church be considered in the members apart, the eyes thereof are knowledge and faith, John 8:56. In this church faith excelled, resting upon Christ alone without Moses's ceremonies, which the Jews would have thrust upon them, Acts 15:1–3.

'With one chain of thy neck.' Chains signified laws, binding as chains, chapter 1:10. Now the church of Antioch sending up Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, about the contention which Cerinthus, as the stories think, and others raised at Antioch concerning the necessity of the ceremonial laws, Acts 15:2, the apostles or elders made a law or decree to abrogate the ceremonies, and yet enjoin some things, partly necessary in themselves, as to avoid fornication; partly necessary to avoid the offence of the Jews, as to abstain from blood, &c. This law the apostles and elders hanged as a chain upon the neck of the church of Antioch and other churches, Acts 15:23–29; whence that church received great consolation, verse 31, and the other churches establishment and increase, Acts 16:4–5.

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'How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!' verse 10.

'How fair is thy love, my sister!' sister implies the same, and such like Gentile churches, whose love is here set forth,

First, By the fairness of it.

Secondly, By the strength, sweetness, cheerfulness, implied in the preferring it above wine.

How fair, and strong, and sweet, and cheerful was the love of the church of Antioch! which aforehand prepared a contribution of their own accord for the poor saints at Jerusalem, even every man according to his ability, Acts 11:29–30. The like or greater love seemed in the poor churches of Macedonia, 2 Corinthians 8:1–5. A fair love for poor men to send relief to others; a strong love for deeply poor to send rich liberality; yet more strong and sweet to pray the messengers with much entreaty to receive it, and a cheerful love to do all this in abundance of joy, and beyond the apostles' own expectation.

This kind of benevolence the apostle calleth an odour of a sweet smell, Philippians 4:18; it was sweeter and better than wine. All this love showed to the poor saints Christ takes here as done to himself, as he will also take it at the last day, Matthew 25:35–40. The decays of this first love show how great this love was at the first, Revelation 2:2–4.

'The smell of thine ointments than all spices', verse 10. Ointments are the graces of God's Spirit, chapter 1:3; these gave a sweet report far and near in those primitive churches, Romans 1:8; Colossians 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:6–8.

'Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon', verse 11.

'Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue.' This commendeth the doctrine and ministry of those first churches in these four respects:

First, For the readiness and flowingness of it; it dropped forth of itself, it needed not to be pressed and constrained, as a honeycomb.

Secondly, For the sweetness of it, as the honey or the honeycomb.

Thirdly, For the wholesomeness of it, as milk.

'The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.' Lebanon is full of sweet trees of spices growing in it, which yield a fragrant smell even afar off. Garments are,

First, Partly the wedding garments of Christ's righteousness.

Secondly, Partly the gracious carriage wherewith they clothed themselves in their outward conversation: they clothed and decked themselves with Christ, not only to their justification, but with his Spirit to their sanctification; which shows forth itself in their humility, meekness, patience, honesty,

faithfulness, diligence, serviceableness of their outward carriage, so far forth as that the heathen smelled a sweet savour in their whole course, Philippians 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9–11; 1 Peter 2:12; 1 John 3:22, 24; Euseb., lib. iii. cap. 30; Plin. Epist., lib. x.; Epist. 97; yea, even in Trajan's time, when the smell of garments was not so strong; yet what a sweet testimony doth Pliny himself, though a persecutor, give of them, when he said he could find no fault with them, but that they rose early, and went into the woods to sing hymns to one Jesus.

Use 1. This, first, is to reform their judgments who speak of the apostolical church as an infant and rude church, whereas Christ, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, and who best knew it, commends it for perfection of beauty, and saith it was fair; so that if a church were such, Christ might embrace it with both his arms.

This is the church, excellent for her ministers, excellent for common Christians, which had pure eyes of knowledge and faith; so that by how much nearer any church comes to this, by so much the fairer it is; and by how much any church comes short of it, by so much the fouler it is.

Use 2. Secondly, This doth teach us that not abuses, but the toleration of them, doth blemish a church, and detract from the perfect beauty of it, for otherwise in the primitive churches were found schisms, heresies, a denying the resurrection, uncharitable going to law, incest, love-feasts in the Lord's supper, strange tongues in the public worship, 1 Corinthians 11:13–14, 19–22, and chapters 14 and 15; and yet, because the apostles stood out against these

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and reformed them, the church still retains her perfect beauty. In the church of Ephesus there were false apostles, Revelation 2:2, yet it was a church; so it is, corruptions not cut off defile a church. As we then desire the church should be pure, leave we all our sins and corruptions which may any way blemish the beauty of the church.

Use 3. Thirdly, This teaches us to be ready to extol and acknowledge, as occasion serveth, other men's labours above our own. Christ gathered a church in his own time which he called fair, verse 1; but this church, gathered by his apostles, he calleth all fair, verse 7. It grieveth him not to ascribe thousands to himself, and ten thousands to them; yea, he foretold it, and promised it freely aforehand, John 14:12. How far was he from a spirit of envy and emulation, though indeed all their success was by his grace and blessing, as Paul said, 'By the grace of God I am that I am!' 1

Corinthians 15:10. The contrary spirit of emulation hindereth churches from taking that which is their own from one another.

Use 4. Fourthly, Hence we learn in what cases one church may step from another, to wit,

First, When Christ leaveth a church, and goeth away with us from it: 'Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me'; so when Christ leaves and forsakes a church, we may leave it and go out with him.

Secondly, When a church is become a universal spotted leopard, and a cruel lion, blaspheming and persecuting the gospel of Christ, as Acts 19:9, and 13:50-51.

These things were found in Rome, from whence we departed; not in England (blessed be the Lord), from whom the Separatists would have us to depart: but Christ still vouchsafes to be with us, converting souls, feeding his lambs, hearing our prayers; we may also worship Christ in truth without fear of laws, yea, with acceptance. When Christ goes, let all his faithful spouses go with him; when there are dens of lions, and men cannot keep the profession of Christ, but fall into their mouths, then it is time to go; but are there these causes now? Doth not Christ dwell here in the simplicity of his ordinances? As long as Christ is here in England, let us not go away, but say, as Peter and John, 'Lord, to whom

shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life', John 6:68. As long as Christ is pleased to feed us, to drop milk and honey into our souls, let us not depart.

Use 5. Fifthly, This may teach us how to knit the heart of Christ to us in ravishing affection, by cleaving to Christ with settled purpose, Acts 11:23, by abounding in helpfulness to the saints, by procuring and keeping faithful shepherds, by burdening the church, not with many chains of laws, verse 9, but only with few, and those necessary: all these are formerly mentioned in the church of Antioch. As ever we desire to have the Lord Jesus Christ to love us, let us grow in knowledge, faith, and all saving graces of his Spirit, and hereby show our love to him, and then we shall find Christ ravished with our love.

Use 6. Sixthly, This doth teach us what kind of love Christ acknowledgeth and embraceth; to wit, fair, strong, sweet, cheerful, in an enlarging ourselves to the relief of his poor saints, verse 10.

Use 7. Seventhly, This doth teach ministers how to make their ministry amiable to Christ, not to preach once a month, or quarterly, by the preaching of the law, but to be full as the honeycomb dropping out of

itself, verse 11; to preach sweet doctrine as honey, and wholesome as milk, for the nourishment of Christ's lambs.

The pastors and ministers of the primitive church did this without help of universities; what a shame then is this for us to come short of them in such abundance of outward helps and means! Wouldst thou be a faithful minister? let thy doctrine drop as honey; preach willingly, freely, sweetly, comfortably.

Use 8. Lastly, This may learn and stir up Christians so to walk, and so to furnish ourselves with inward graces, and with outward commendable carriage, as may yield a sweet savour and smell to God and man, that it may be like the smell of Lebanon, that men may smell a sweet savour that come near them: let our hearts be inwardly furnished with the graces of God as with sweet ointments; and our outward garments, our outward conversation, so directed with honesty, integrity, humility, meekness, and love, &c., that our names be not dishonoured, much less God by our means. Cast we aside stinking drunkenness, whoredom,

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malice, covetousness, &c. And thus doing we shall take away all offence; so doing, Christ shall look at us as his fair spouse, and say, 'Thou art all fair, my love', verse 7.

'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse', chapter 4:12 to 5:2.

After the church gathered by the ministry of the apostles, next followeth that under the ten persecutions, which is here described,

First, By her restraint, verse 13.

Secondly, By her privacy, verse 14.

Thirdly, By her fruitfulness, refreshing and watering others, verse 15.

Fourthly, By her prayer in this estate: wherein consider,

1. The petitions; which are three:

First, For the arising of the wind, and coming into the south, verse 16.

Secondly, For favourable blasts of it, and that for this end, the flowing forth of her spices.

Thirdly, That Christ would come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits, verse 16.

2. Christ's answer thereunto:

First, He cometh into his garden.

Secondly, He gathereth and enjoyeth the fruits of it.

Thirdly, He fills his church's friends with a large measure of plenty, chapter 5:1.

‘A garden’, verse 12. The church is here so called, as verse 13, an orchard; or, as it is in the original, a paradise, as if this were the garden of Eden. All the world is as a wilderness, or at least a wild field; only the church is God’s garden or orchard, in these three respects:

First, As the garden of paradise was the habitation of Adam in the estate of innocency, so is the church of all those who are renewed into innocency.

Secondly, As in that garden were all manner of pleasant and wholesome herbs and trees growing, so in the church are all manner of useful and savoury spirits.

Thirdly, As a man walketh in his garden to refresh himself, so doth Christ walk in his church, yea, and calleth his friends thither to walk with him.

‘A spring, a fountain.’ Not because the church is the fountain of grace, but because, Christ being in

it, it is the spring or fountain of the waters of life unto all, Zechariah 13:1; Psalm 87:7.

‘A garden, spring, fountain, enclosed, shut up, sealed.’ Not by a pale or wall of defence by Christian magistrates, but rather shut Up by restraint; for the word signifies to enclose or shut up, as with locks and fetters.

Again, the church prayeth for the enlargement of the flowing of her spices, verse 16, and therefore her present shutting up was uncomfortable to her.

The church was then said to be shut up,

First, Because under the persecutions it was shut up in prisons, and other places of punishment, as under locks and fetters.

Secondly, Because the church then assembled in private close places, woods, dens, &c., and not in the open places of towns or cities.

Thirdly, Because it was shut up from free access of foreigners, men without; neither were the emperors willing their subjects should repair to them, nor the church willing to admit all promiscuously.

‘Thy plants’, verses 13–14; that is, thy children or members, as an orchard of pomegranates, camphire; verse 14, spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon. The children of the church are compared to these wholesome and sweet fruits, trees, herbs, in a double respect:

First, Because the virtues of these fruits and spices are especially seen when they are cut and poured out, or beaten, or burned, or bruised; so it is with the graces of God’s children, they are chiefly exercised by the hard dealing of persecutors.

Secondly, There was in the faithful then persecuted a resemblance of the virtues of these fruits and spices.

Pomegranates repress and restrain the heat of choler, the malignity of fevers, the looseness of the belly; they also comfort the stomach and bowels, and prevent faintings and swoonings.

Camphire, with his sweetness of smell, delighteth and strengtheneth the spirits, cheereth up the mind, helps the stone, restrains ulcers.

Spikenard stayeth distillations from the head, strengtheneth the stomach, digesteth cold humours, helpeth conception.

Saffron thinneth phlegm, helps lethargies, coughs, and pleurisies, furthereth digestion, comforteth the

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heart, redresses the rottenness of the other parts, which also are strengthened.

Calamus helps the passages of the urine, and the faults of the reins, helpeth also the womb and conception.

Cinnamon strengtheneth and cheereth the spirits and mind, drieth up rotten matter, helpeth against poison, warmeth and strengtheneth the stomach to digestion.

Frankincense restraineth and helpeth ulcers, gouts, fluxes of blood, cleanseth and glueth up wounds and ulcers.

Myrrh refresheth the brain, drieth up superfluous humours, helpeth straitness of breath, restraineth ulcers and itchiness, filleth ulcers and wounds with flesh.

Aloes cleanse tough phlegm and choler, dry up raw and cold humours, preserve the rest from putrifying, open obstructions, strengthen the stomach strongly.¹

Suitable to the virtues of these fruits and spices, persecution bred and stirred up in the faithful graces of like efficacy, to restrain heats of emulation, contention, ambition; to repress ulcers of malignity and disaffection one to another; to heal the coldness, hypocrisy, and rottenness of their spirits; to stay distillations of cold raw matters, dropping from the head bishops of Rome; as also to strengthen appetite to the word, to comfort the faint-hearted, to knit the members together.

'A fountain of gardens'. &c., verse 15. For the church, pouring out her confessions and martyrdoms for the truth, propagated and watered many churches; for *sanguis martyrum* was *semen ecclesiae*, a well of living waters, John 4:10. The church was not then dried up, but plentifully stored with

the graces of the Spirit, 'streams from Lebanon'. The churches were stored with such graces of the Spirit as streamed and issued out from the mountains of Israel, the writings of the prophets and apostles.

'Awake, or arise, O north wind', &c., verse 16. The church's desire that a wind might arise in the north, and come into the south; to wit, that Constantine, born in York, would come into the southern

¹ Fernelius de Method. Medend., lib. iv. cap. 7,9,19,21,22,26,27, lib. vi. cap. 12,13,14,12.

parts, and take the empire upon him ('and blow upon my garden'), driving away the blasts of early persecutions, and breathe favourably and whole somely upon the church, cooling the tempestuous heats of the persecutions which the church endured. The church prayeth not the south to come, but the north to come into the south, else,

First, The word blow, if it had reference to both winds, should have been of the plural number.

Secondly, North wind and south wind blowing together would interrupt and cross one another by their contrariety.

'That the spices thereof may flow forth', verse 16. That the gospel and ordinances of Christ and the graces of his children, which were there restrained from their free manifestation by the persecutions, might have free passage.

'Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat of his pleasant fruits.' Let Constantine come to them, and partake of the benefits of the church's serviceable graces to God and him.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEXT.

Verse 1. I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

Verse 2. I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

Verse 3. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?

Verse 4. My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.

Verse 5. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

Verse 6. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

Verse 7. The watchmen that went about the city found

me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

Verse 8. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

Verse 9. What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

Verse 10. My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

Verse 11. His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy, and black as a raven:

Verse 12. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set:

Verse 13. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh:

Verse 14. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires:

Verse 15. His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars:

Verse 16. His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

THE EXPLANATION.

Verse 1. I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

Constantine came into the church, enjoyed the fellowship of it, did partake in all the parts of it, yea, and richly endowed it; so that the church and all her friends did eat and drink, yea, and did drink abundantly, of wealth, preferments, &c., whence it was that she fell into a deep sleep, chapter 4:12.

Use 1. First, This serves to stir us up to thankfulness and fruitfulness to God, who hath planted us, not in the wilderness of the world, but in the garden of his church. If we now transgress, as Adam did, eating of the forbidden fruits, Genesis 3:6, 11–12, 24, and 2:17, God will take his garden from us, and cast us out of it.

Use 2. Secondly, This lets us see all the goodly

situations of the earth are but dunghills and deserts in comparison of the church. The church is a garden, and in it are fountains of living waters for every thirsty soul.

Use 3. Thirdly, Though the church be sometimes in open view of all, as a city set on a hill, Matthew 5:14, yet it is sometimes also otherwise, enclosed, shut up, sealed.

Use 4. Fourthly, When the church is shut up in corners and conventicles, the members of it hatch not treasons, schisms, factions, but still remaineth as a garden, orchard, fountain, yielding sweet waters, savoury and wholesome fruits.

Use 5. Fifthly, See the wonderful use of afflictions and persecutions to the church; what savoury, and wholesome, and precious graces are thereby exercised; yea, how mightily doth the church then spread when it is most restrained.

Use 6. Sixthly, See then what the weapons of the church were against their persecutors; not daggers, dags, powder, pistols, rebellions, treasons, &c., but prayers for more seasonable times.

Use 7. Seventhly, We are to be stirred up to pray that God would now stir up a wholesome north wind to blow favourably upon the churches beyond the seas, and strongly against their enemies.

Use 8. Eighthly, This may teach us, whilst we enjoy at home these fair blasts, not to stream forth the unsavoury corruptions of our own spirits, but the sweet graces of God; else we abuse these sweet opportunities we do enjoy.

Use 9. Lastly, It is a time of much rejoicing when God stirreth up kings and princes to come into the fellowship of the church, and to partake of God's ordinances in the same.

'I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying', &c., chapter 5:2 to 6:4.

Now followeth the description of the estate of the church from Constantine's time to the time of restoring of the gospel, and reforming of the church by the ministry of Luther and other late divines.

After that Constantine had largely endowed the church with peace, and wealth, and honour, it fell into an estate of carnal security, which carnal security is described,

First, By a comparison, resembling it to sleep;

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which sleep of hers is amplified by the divers conditions: yet my heart waketh.

Secondly, By the carriage of Christ towards her in this her sleep; where observe,

1. The means he useth to awake and stir her up, which were,

First, Calling to her and knocking, as verse 2.

Secondly, Putting in his hand by the hole of the door, verse 4.

2. The success of those means, or the respect she gave to them, or the use she made of them, which was double:

First, His calling and knocking she neglecteth wholly, upon very slight pretences and excuses, verse 3,

Secondly, His putting in his hand by the hole of the door;

1. She is affected with it: 'my bowels were moved for him', verse 4.

2. She upon it sought him; which is further set forth,

First, By the degrees of her seeking him:

1. She arose to open to him, verse 5.

2. Her hands and fingers dropped myrrh upon the handles of the lock, verse 5.

3. She opened to her beloved, verse 6.

Secondly, By the fruits or success of her seeking, where is interpreted the fruit or success of these two degrees of her seeking, in regard,

1. Of Christ: 'he was gone, he had withdrawn himself', &c., verse 6.

2. Of the watchmen, of whom she asketh not for her beloved; but they finding her seeking Christ, they

First, Smote her.

Secondly, Wounded her.

Thirdly, Took away her veil from her, verse 7.

Fourthly, She, not discouraged with this bad dealing and hard usage of the watchmen, added a fourth degree in her seeking of Christ; she chargeth the daughters of Jerusalem to move Christ for her, verse 8, the success or fruit whereof is added; for upon this charge,

1. The daughters of Jerusalem are stirred and occasioned to inquire of her who Christ is, verse 9.

2. She by their inquiry is occasioned to describe him,

First, By his colours, verse 10.

Secondly, By his eminency, verse 10.

Thirdly, By his several members and parts, verse 11–16.

Fourthly, By his amiableness, verse 16.

3. The daughters of Jerusalem by this her description of him are stirred up to affect him, and to promise their fellowship in seeking of him with her, chapter 6:1.

'I sleep', verse 2. The church, surfeiting with abundance of prosperity in Constantine's time, neglected the purity and power both of doctrine and worship, and received corruptions, of which were prayers to saints, building of temples to them, superstitious regard of their relics, images, and their worship, ceremonies annexed to their sacraments, choice of meats, affecting and applauding monkish life, purgatory, &c.

'My heart waketh.' The church was still awake,

First, To hearty devotion, according to their knowledge, and beyond it.

Secondly, To discern some such gross heresies as quenched the heart and life of Christianity; as the impiety of Arius denying the Godhead of Christ; Macedonius and Eunomius denying the person of the Holy Ghost; of Nestorius dividing the person in Christ; of Eutyches, confounding their natures: other straw and stubble built upon the foundation they neglected.

'It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open.' Christ used good means to awaken his spouse, and to raise her up from this carnal security.

First, He calleth to her in the voice of sundry good divines, who complained of the intolerable burden of human inventions wherewith the common Christians were defiled and dabbled, as Christ here complains. His locks and hair were full of the drops of the night—drops which coldness of religion and darkness of ignorance engendered.¹

Secondly, He knocked by the raps and blows which Constantius, Valens, and Julian gave to the church, the two former persecuting the orthodox bishops and ministers and other Christians in favour of the Arians, and Julian making flat apostasy from the church, and subtly supplanting the nursing of religion.

¹ August. Epist., 119.

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'I put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?' verse 3.

'I have put off my coat.' Thus upon slight pretence the church refuseth to open to Christ: she pretends religion, and the worship of God would appear too naked if it were not clothed with goodly and comely human inventions; how then should she in so naked a manner open to Christ? Human inventions do not clothe religion, or the church professing it, with any comely ornaments; but, as it were, with warm blankets lap her and lull her asleep in the bed of perfunctory worship and carnal security.

I do not here conceive that the church acknowledgeth she hath cast off her garments of Christ's righteousness; for then how should she remain the spouse of Christ? yea, how then should her heart have been otherwise than asleep too? but only she pleadeth she should appear too naked if she should open to Christ, if she should worship him in the simplicity and nakedness of his simple ordinances.

'I have washed my feet.' Not with the laver of regeneration, for that would have been no impediment, but a furtherance to the pure worship of God; but she had washed her feet, she had freed and cleansed her conversation from defilements of secular affairs; she had taken up a devout regard of virginity, or hermitish or monkish solitary retiredness. She being cleansed and washed in these devices, cannot betake herself to worship the Lord in his simple ordinances, and in the ways of her calling, without some defilement: thus marriage and worldly business, though both allowed

by God, yet seem a defilement in comparison of more strict superstitious devotion.

‘My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him’, verse 4.

‘My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door.’ or, ‘My beloved put down his hand by the hole of the door.’ Either of which imply that Christ did at first use means for himself to open the door, when she would not, attempting to remove the impediments which hinder him from enjoying his spouse. First, ‘Put his hand by the hole of the door’ when he stirred up Christian emperors, such as Martianus, and both the Theodosii, to call synods, and to command the fathers

assembled to give all diligence to root out all heresies and depravations of doctrine and worship, that the pure and holy faith might shine forth.

How easily might the church upon such encouragements have broken the bars and bolts of superstition crept into the worship of God, whereby Christ was debarred from drawing near to them!

The bishops assembled in those councils of that time condemned those gross heresies which blasphemed the doctrine of the Trinity; but how deeply did they neglect to redress all other enormities and corruptions! Besides, Christ is said to put in his hand by the hole of the door, when he puts his Spirit, which is the power and finger of God, Matthew 12: 28, with Luke 11:20, into the hearts of his people, whereby they are enlightened to know him better, and stir up men honestly to seek after him. So Christ enlightened and stirred up Leo Isauricus, Constantine’s son, and Leo Copronymus, to bend their best endeavours to root out idolatry, and to remove images, which were one of the chiefest abuses in God’s worship.

‘My bowels were moved for him.’ These good princes, and other Christians at that time, were strongly and inwardly affected to the purity of God’s worship, in which alone Christ is found.

‘I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock’, verse 5.

‘I rose up to open to my beloved.’ The church under these good emperors rose up out of the blankets of these human inventions wherewith she was covered in a bed of sleeping devotion, and endeavoured to restore openly the simplicity of God’s worship, rejecting images and idolatry.

'My hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.' The endeavours of the church were sweet, and delectable, and acceptable to Christ, and savoury to the people, to preserve them, as myrrh, from further persecution, when Constantine, the son of Leo Isauricus, called the seventh Constantinopolitan council, and there truly and solemnly convinced and condemned the worship of images; as also when Charles the Great did the like some forty years after at a synod in Frankfort.

'I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had

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withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer', verse 6.

'I opened to my beloved.' This attempt of the church in executing in some places the decrees of these synods was an opening of the door to Christ: images and idolatry being shut forth, there is a door open for Christ to enter.

'But my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.' Christ did not delight to reveal himself in their public assemblies, though images were in some places well removed, both because those decrees for removing of images were not generally received and executed, through the coming in of the bishop of Rome; and because the worship of God was still full of heathenish and Jewish superstitions, which Christ took no pleasure in.

'My soul failed when he spake.' The faithful in those times were assembled with fear and grief to consider holy Christ now speaketh to them afar off, comes not near to their hearts and consciences; so that now, though they used such means to find him as the times afforded, yet Christ did take no pleasure in those means, in those worships, nor to their sense, in those that used them.

'The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me', verse 7.

'The watchmen that went about the city found me.' These watchmen are the bishops and ministers of that time; as also the keepers of the walls may well be the magistrates: for civil government is a wall of defence to the church of God.

‘They found me.’ And yet the church inquireth not of them, as she had done before of other watchmen, chapter 3:3, ‘Have you not seen him whom my soul loves?’ For she knew these watchmen were of another spirit; rather wolves in sheep’s clothing, and more ready to beat her from Christ than to bring her to Christ. They smote me with censures of excommunications, as Gregory the Third pope of Rome did Leo Isauricus for his endeavours. Afterwards, when sundry Christians, having intelligence that the bishops and doctors were assembled in a temple at Byzantium, to give sentence for restoring of images, in the days of the empress Irene,

came upon them, and forced them with weapons to leave off such decrees; these people were afterwards disarmed and banished into sundry islands. Thus were the faithful smitten with the censures of excommunication by the watchmen of the city, of banishment by the keepers of the walls.

‘They wounded me.’ With the canons of the second council of Nice, whither that council, assembled in the temple of Byzantium, and scattered by the people, was afterwards translated by the counsel of the bishops of Rome. In this council images were again restored, to the great grief of the godly, yea, to the wounding of their hearts. The sentence of a general council in the behalf of any error is no small wound to the whole church.

‘They took away my veil from me’; when they forced the bishops of Rhodes, Nice, Neo-Cæsarea, Hierapolis, and others, to recantation, who before had worthily opposed images. To bring men to open recantation, to lay open their nakedness, especially when they recant from the truth, is to take away the veil.

‘I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love’, verse 8.

‘I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem.’ The church, finding herself so hardly dealt with by the ministers and magistrates, would not give over her search after Christ, yet now seeketh him in the fellowship of private Christians, and stirreth them up to pray for her.

‘Tell him I am sick of love.’ That is, in your prayers acknowledge that the church is ready to fail and perish for want of his presence and fellowship in his public ordinances.

‘What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?’ &c., verse 9.

The Christians, the daughters of Jerusalem, from this day forward to the days of Peter Waldus, of whom the Waldenses took their name, were very ignorant of Christ, and therefore they ask who he was, and wherein

better than another. But instead of him they magnified the church; holy mother church was all in all with them; her they acknowledged to be fairest among women, though they see nothing in Christ better than in another.

'My beloved is white and ruddy', &c., verse 10. Thus

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Petrus Waldus, a citizen of Lyons, opened Christ to the daughters of Jerusalem, to the children of the church, setting before them the white innocency of true holiness in him, and the ruddy scarlet dye of his death. The righteousness and death of Christ, plainly yet powerfully opened by him, brought many to behold Christ, and to profess him, who, when by persecution stirred up against them by the bishop of Rome, they were dispersed into many places—multiplied exceedingly; and being then called Albigenses, in many battles fought against the soldiers which Pope Innocent the Third had sent against them, under conduct of Simon Mounteford and others, signed with the cross; in many of which the Albigenses prevailed, helped by Reymund, Earl of Thelus, and Peter, King of Aragon, though afterwards they were overcome and scattered further into many places of Christendom. So in regard of these troops of many thousands, Christ is here called the standard-bearer, as the word signifieth, or the choice of ten thousand. Again, at that time Christ may be said to be white and ruddy in regard of his members, who were then white with innocency of life, yet ruddy, enduring persecution.

'His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.' verse 11.

'His head is as the most fine gold.' Christ comes now to be described in his members more particularly. This head of gold Christ showed on the earth in the person of Frederick the Second, emperor of Rome, a prince of much purity and worth, as a head of the church of fine gold. He contended with many popes about the headship of the church, advanced the headship of Christ and of himself, his vicegerents, above the counterfeit head of the pope's supremacy. He wrestled for Christ against them with much difficulty, yet prevailed; so that even in the popish schools his election of God was agreed and condescended unto by sundry.

'His locks are bushy or curled, and black as a raven.' Curled black hair is a sign of heat and courage and wit in him that it groweth upon. Such was the emperor himself, and such were the common Christians of that age that did depend upon their emperor; they stuck close to him. Learned

men with wit, more than former ages had yielded, and soldiers with courage maintained his person and cause.

‘His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set’, verse 12.

Doves diving in rivers of waters, dive their bellies deep into the waters, so that their eyes look close and narrowly upon it.

First, The eyes are here set forth by their care of the church. He is not so far off removed from it that he had need of the pope to be his visible vicar to look to it.

Secondly, By their mild innocency, implied in that they are doves’ eyes and washed with milk; whereas the Pope’s eyes were as hawks’ eyes, looking eagerly after the prey.

Thirdly, By their fit standing, so as they may well look to the whole body; whereas the pope’s eyes cannot possibly watch to look well to the estate of the church so far off him.

To this purpose tended the doctrine of the faithful divines in the following age, such as Michael Cesenus, Petrus de Carbania, Johannes de Poliaco, and such as followed them.

‘His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh’, verse 13.

‘His cheeks are as a bed of spices.’

Cheeks imply the outward face of the faithful church, for the cheeks are a place most conspicuous, which shows that the faithful of those times were as beds of spices and sweet flowers, to wit, not gathered into any set garden, as afterwards in Luther’s time, but scattered here and there, chapter 6:2, yet of sweet and precious savour in the nostrils of Christ; yea, one Nicholas de Bibrath, living about that time, compareth faith and piety in the church to spice rare and dear.

‘His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.’ The doctrine of the church at those times was such as, like myrrh, served to preserve the faithful from putrefaction, according to that, ‘That which ye have already, hold fast till I come’, Revelation 2:25. In the primitive apostolic church her lips dropped like a honeycomb, being of strong, sweet relish to delight and nourish to full growth, chapter 4:11. But the lips of this church drop rather myrrh than honey; they rather preserved some truth of grace than yielded any abundant nourishment to procure increase to the church.

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'His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires', verse 14.

'His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl.' Hands are instruments of action; their being set with gold rings implieth their purity and dignity. The beryl cleareth moisture and dim sight, Franciscus Rudis, de Gemma., lib. ii. cap. 8. All these show that the ministry of the gospel should be then more powerful; and indeed God, about that time, A.D. 1300, stirred up Dantes, Marcellius, Potavinus, Ocham, Gregorius Ariminensis, Petrarchus, Wickliffe, and many more, whose ministry brought on so many, that some have counted it the first resurrection; yea, the magistrates of that time, Ludovicus Bavarus the emperor, Philip of France, Edward the Third of England, stood out in many things against the pope, as those whose hands had got more strength, and better felt their own worth, and whose eyes were cleared to see more light than their predecessors.

'His belly as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.' The belly is a hidden part of the body, yet such from which the rest is nourished; which fitly resembleth the sacraments here, as also chapter 7:2, which being hid from those that are without, yet nourish the whole body as a heap of wheat. The doctrine of the sacraments, and the pure administration of the same, was at this time restored by John Wickliffe, and embraced by his followers, though condemned in the Council of Constance. These sacraments are said to be overlaid with sapphires, whose property is to strengthen and cherish the principal solid parts, because of the efficacy of the sacraments truly taught and administered, to strengthen and quicken God's graces in us.¹

'His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars', verse 15.

'His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.' These two legs seem to be John Huss and Jerome of Prague, who stood constantly in defence of the truth, even unto death, being established in the truth and grace of God, as it were pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.

'His countenance is as Lebanon.'

¹ Rucus Deginus, lib. i. cap. 2.

The faithful grew so plentiful in Bohemia that they seemed, even to the adversary, to be like a thick wood, as many and firm, which they

were not able to hew down; and therefore they were forced in the Council of Constance to allow them the use of the cup in the Lord's supper, because they could not by strong hand keep them from it.

'Excellent as the cedars.' The cedar is a tree eminent for tallness and soundness, or durableness: such was then the face and countenance of the church, observed to grow up in conspicuous eminency, and in soundness of love to the truth, that the popish teachers were not able to corrupt them any longer with their seducements.

'His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem', verse 16.

'His mouth is most sweet.'

The doctrine of the gospel was taught more and more savourily by Johannes Rochesana and other ministers in Bohemia.

'He is altogether lovely, or desirable.' Christ then began again so to dispense himself to his church, in giving them the faith and sense of his goodness, that now they saw or found nothing in Christ, or in the profession of his name, but what was wholly desirable. The rebukes of Christ began now to seem greater riches than the treasures of Egypt or Babylon in some former ages, Hebrews 11:26. They that saw the truth were often brought to yield and recant; but these saw nothing to be more desired than Christ. Besides, he is now called holy and desirable, because so many so generally were stirred up to desire and seek reformation. The regions were white and ready to the harvest, else Luther had not found such good success in his ministry.

'This is my beloved, and this is my friend.'

The doctrine of certainty of our adoption, justification, salvation, began now more plainly to be discerned and acknowledged. Christ is not only fair and desirable in himself, but then the church could more boldly say, 'This is my beloved, this is my friend'.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE TEXT.

Verse 1. Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.

Verse 2 My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

Verse 3. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

Verse 4. Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.

Verse 5. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

Verse 6. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.

Verse 7. As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.

Verse 8. There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.

Verse 9. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

Verse 10. Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

Verse 11. I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.

Verse 12. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.

Verse 13. Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.

THE EXPLANATION.

Verse 1. Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.

The church's affectionate describing and praising

Christ stirred up many then to look after religion and reformation,
verse 1.

Use 1. First, We may here see the danger of surfeiting the church with wealth and pleasures and honour. Constantine had, in the first verse, inebriated the church with wealth and honour, and hereupon the church falleth into a long sleep, which she shook not wholly off for many ages. No wonder then of that speech heard from heaven, *hodie venenum concidit in ecclesiam*; Now is poison poured or fallen into the church.

Use 2. Secondly, This may let us see that they have not the spirit of the church of Christ, that when they hear many voices in religion carried sundry ways, know not whom to follow, cannot discern which is the true voice of Christ among them. This church here could discern the voice of Christ even in her sleep, how much more easily if she had been well awake!

Use 3. Thirdly, This is to exhort both ministers and other faithful Christians to watchfulness, lest otherwise corruption in doctrine and worship grow amongst the people, till the locks of Christ be wholly dabbled with superstitions; the locks of Christ, to wit, the common Christians.

Use 4. Fourthly, This may teach us to know that they provide not well for the direction of their own judgments, that depend upon the voice of the ancient churches for their chief pattern and guidance in doctrine and worship. Who would build upon the words of a man (though otherwise a good man) when he is half asleep?

Use 5. Fifthly, Hence we may discern it is better the church should open to Christ, appearing before him in the naked simplicity of his worship, than to cover ourselves and his worship with the blankets and inventions of men's weaving, which will but lull the church asleep in drowsy performances of perfunctory worship, and cause Christ to withdraw himself from us.

Use 6. Sixthly, This may teach us to know, to our shame and grief, that our drowsy hearts will neglect to open to Christ upon his calling and knocking, unless he be pleased to put the finger of his Spirit into our hearts, to open an entrance for himself.

Use 7. Seventhly, The faithful must not wonder if, opening their hearts to Christ and seeking after

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him, sometimes they find him not; for it was so with the church here, and hath been so with the faithful in all ages. We neglecting to receive

him when he offereth himself, we must not wonder if for a time he neglect us.

Use 8. Eighthly, We may from hence learn that bad ministers will sooner bear with any disorder in people than serious seeking after Christ, and after the purity of ordinances.

Use 9. Ninthly, We may here see persecutions alienate not the affections of the faithful, but inflame them to more ardency and earnest pursuit after Christ, as this church did.

Use 10. Tenthly, It may be known the church hath lain in a deep sleep, when common Christians can more acknowledge the church than Christ himself, when they can see her to be the fairest among women, but know not any eminent worth in Christ.

Use 11. Eleventhly, The estate of many churches, in many ages, maketh but one body of Christ; in every of which Christ manifesteth himself, in some members more eminently than in others.

Use 12. Twelfthly, Christ had his faithful people and members in the world before Luther was born; yea, he showed himself glorious in sundry of them in the darkest times of popery.

Use 13. Thirteenthly, In Christ it is well known there is nothing but what is lovely and desirable; even persecutions for his sake are lovely and glorious.

Use 14. Fourteenthly, It is no comfort, or but small, to know Christ to be every way precious and excellent, unless we can also say he is ours. 'This is my beloved, this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.'

Use 15. Fifteenthly, The affectionate, faithful preaching and setting forth of Christ stirreth up in others a saving knowledge of Christ, and hearty affection to him. The church here describeth Christ affectionately and faithfully, speaketh of him as her own, whence the daughters of Jerusalem are converted and stirred up to seek after him.

Use 16. Lastly, Hearts truly touched with sincere desire after Christ choose rather to seek him in the church, in the fellowship of the church, than by ways of separation, as this church did: 'Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.'

'My beloved is gone into his garden', chapter 6:2–9. The Holy Ghost in these words descendeth to set forth the state of the church reformed by the ministry of Luther and other late divines, as in the verse following the calling of the Jews.

This reformed church diversely described,

First, By Christ's visitation of her, together with the ends thereof:

1. To feed in the gardens.
2. To gather lilies, verse 2.

Secondly, By her mutual fellowship with Christ, verse 3.

Thirdly, By her degrees of rising, wherein she is likened to be, verse

4,

1. As Tirzah.
2. As Jerusalem.
3. As an army with banners.

Fourthly, By her members, verse 5-7.

1. Eyes.
2. Hair.
3. Teeth.
4. Temples.

Fifthly, By comparing the several reformed churches as amongst themselves, and preferring one above the rest of the reformed churches there.

1. As queens, sixty.
2. As concubines, eighty.
3. As virgins without number, verse 8.
4. As a dove; and who,

First, To Christ is undefiled.

Secondly, To the whole church as an only one, as a choice one.

Thirdly, to the rest,

1. Blessed to the daughters.
2. Praised to the queens and concubines, verses 8-9.

'My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the garden, and to gather lilies', verse 2.

'My beloved is gone down into his garden.' The church, which Christ next visited, and wherein he was first found in that general apostasy wherein the church sought Christ and could not find him.

In the former chapter was the church of Wittenberg reformed by the ministry of Luther, which was a garden; being,

First, Stored with variety of godly people, as

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sweet flowers set in order, some teaching, some hearing.

Secondly, Fenced in as with a hedge, pale, or wall, by the protection of Frederick, the good Duke of Saxony.

Thirdly, A place wherein Christ walked, as we do in our gardens, to refresh himself and his friends.

'Is gone down into his garden.' Descending from those famous cities and eminent places of Rome and Constantinople into a mean country city.

'To the beds of spices.' Because in Germany, at that time, sundry Christians were called and sorted into several beds and companies in several places, though not attaining at the first to be so many gardens, so many several churches.

'To feed in the garden.' In process of time these several beds of spices (companies of Christians) grew up to the fashion of just and full churches, in Zurich, Strasburg, Brussels, Berne, Geneva, besides those in Hesse and Prussia.

'To feed,'

First, Both himself, with his people's prayers, and other worship and obedience.

Secondly, His people, with his word and sacraments, and other ordinances.

'And to gather lilies'; that is, to gather and cull more and more faithful Christians out of a wild field of worldly people into the fellowship of his church; as it were, to gather lilies into his garden.

They are called lilies,

First, For their fairness.

Secondly, For excellency or eminency, Matthew 6:29; Proverbs 12:26.

Thirdly, For God's care in providing for them beyond their own labour and industry, Matthew 6:28–29.

'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies', verse 3.

'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine'; which words imply four things:

First, That the church had familiar fellowship with Christ in his holy public ordinances, especially in the main doctrine of pardon of sins by Christ's blood alone, and of justification by faith.

Secondly, That she enjoyed this fellowship with him before the time of her deliverance out of a Babylonish or Romish captivity; for the same words are

used upon the deliverance out of Babel, chapter 2:15, and enjoying God's ordinances in their own country; but with this difference, there the church saith, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his', because, first, he

delivered her out of Babel before he gave her the free use of his ordinances; but here the church saith, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine', because she first found Christ in his ordinances before she enjoyed deliverance from subjection to Rome, for Luther preached against the pope's pardons before he rejected the supremacy of the pope.

Thirdly, Their open profession of their fellowship with Christ, when the princes of Germany openly protested against the mass and other corruptions in the church, and avowed the defence of the reformation begun, whence they were afterwards called protestants.¹

Fourthly, Christ's gracious protection of those churches, especially in their first beginnings; for how should Luther, a poor friar, have attempted and gone through with so great a work, against such great and general opposition, and in the end die quietly in his bed, if Christ had not held him, as it were, in his arms?

'He feedeth among the lilies.' He refresheth himself and strengtheneth his people, conversing amongst them who strove for whiteness, and purity, and reformation.

'Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners', verse 4.

'Thou art beautiful as Tirzah.' Tirzah was the chief city of the kingdom of Israel after they had separated themselves from Judah, until Samaria was afterwards builded, 1 Kings 14:17, and 15:33.

The city and governors of it—the people having recourse to it for judgment rather than to Jerusalem—were at first in disgrace and obloquy with the Jews for their schism and separation from the house of David at Jerusalem, and for her rebellion against the king of Judah; but this did not diminish her beauty, because this separation was from God.

Afterward Tirzah lost her beauty by erecting the golden calves, and falling off, not only from the idolatry of Solomon, 1 Kings 12:24, wherein they

¹ Sleyden., lib. vi. 7.

did well, but from the true worship of God, restored and continued in the temple of Jerusalem. But Solomon here speaketh of Tirzah while she retained her beauty. And indeed the reformed churches were in this like unto Tirzah, at first in disgrace and obloquy for their separation from Rome, and rebellion against the emperor and other princes, and yet

nevertheless beautiful, because this separation was from God, in regard of idolatries of the church of Rome, greater than those of Solomon.

Thus the Duke of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse were proscribed as rebels against the emperor, and yet their cause was beautiful and good. The faithful at that time in England were burned, in King Henry the Eighth's days, as heretics and refractory subjects or rebels, yet beautiful in God's sight.

'Comely as Jerusalem.' In process of time the church wore out the suspicion and disgrace of heresy and separation and rebellion, and was countenanced and adorned by royal laws in the days of King Edward the Sixth, and by laws of the empire tolerating the protestant princes, so that the church seemed as Jerusalem, the state of princes, the true church of God, and at unity also within itself, wherein the comeliness consisted, Psalm 12:2, 3-5; for as Jerusalem had been three cities, Zion, Salem, Millo, and all three were knit together into one Jerusalem, so the three differences between Lutherans and Calvinists in doctrine and discipline at Geneva were all compacted together in brotherly love in their harmony of confessions.

'Terrible as an army with banners.' The church was beautiful as Tirzah in King Henry the Eighth's time, comely as Jerusalem in King Edward the Sixth's time, terrible as an army with banners in Queen Elizabeth's time, when the protestant princes grew formidable to the emperor, England and the Low Countries to the Spaniard and pope. How terrible was that overthrow which the Spaniard in '88 received!

'Turn away thine eyes', &c., verse 5. The eyes, as above, chapter 4:9, of the church assembled, are the ministers or the members considered apart; as, first, Knowledge; Secondly, Faith. In both respects the eyes of the church were wonderful amiable, so that Christ speaketh affectionately to the church

after the manner of lovers ravished with the beauty of their spouses.

'Turn away thine eyes, for they have overcome me.'

What worthy ministers did that first age of the reformed churches yield! as Luther, Calvin, Martin Bucer, Cranmer, Hooper, Ridley, Latimer, &c.¹ What a wonderful measure of heavenly light did they of a sudden bring into the church! and that out of the midst of darkness and popery, from whence it was that the knowledge and faith of the faithful then was wonderfully enlarged, far beyond the ignorance of former times.

The eyes of the faithful in Christ's time lay under their locks, chapter 4:1, as hindered from clear sight by many errors; but the eyes of the faithful, now seeing the truth much more plainly, are not hindered by such locks hanging over them. How clear was their faith, that having seen him which was invisible, Hebrews 11:27, feared not the fierceness of their kings and princes, but endured patiently fiery persecutions and bloody massacres!

'Thy hair is like a flock of goats.'

'Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep which go up from washing', verses 5,7.

'As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.'

The estate of common Christians set out by the hair; and of the ministers set out by the teeth, and of the church governors set forth by the piece of pomegranate, was the same in the church reformed as in the primitive church, chapter 4:1-3, where the description of those parts is used, and here repeated; only with this difference, the teeth are not so even cut in reformed churches as in Christ's time; some of them exceed their brethren in authority and jurisdiction, whereas those were framed to more brotherly love in Christ's time. Whence the teeth they are said to be even cut, which in these teeth is here left out; yet both the ministers of higher and lower rank were as sheep flocking and consorting together, washed with the laver of regeneration, fruitful and powerful in their ministry, and therefore are here described as a flock of sheep come up from the washing, 'whereof everyone beareth twins, and none is barren among them', verse 6.

¹ Peter Martyr.

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Use I. First, We may here learn to behold a different estate of the church. Sometimes it is in a garden, sundry Christians gathered together into beds and knots, and growing up into good order together, delighting and refreshing both God and man with the savour of their sweetness. Such was and is the estate of the church reformed. sometimes, again, the members of the church scattered abroad in the wild fields, seeking where they may find Christ, as ill the former chapter.

The church is here visible as in a garden in some of their eminent and principal members. If then the papists ask, Where was the church visible before Luther? The answer is, It was visible, not in open congregations indeed, as it were gardens, but in sundry members of the church, as sweet

spices and flowers, growing here and there, whom the popes and their instruments, like wild boars, sought to root out, and yet God preserveth them.

Sometime the church findeth Christ comfortably in her solemn assemblies, when good Christians are met together to serve him in the simplicity of his ordinances; sometimes, when they can find no such gardens, nor him in any place openly worshipped, yet even then they seek him here and there where they can find him.

Use 2. Secondly, The like uses are here to be made of these gardens, of that chapter 4:14.

Use 3. Thirdly, To teach us a true description of the church. It is, as it were, a garden, an assembly of many good Christians or saints, as it were sweet spices or flowers set in order, as it were beds or knots, amongst whom Christ walketh, they enjoying fellowship with him in his public ordinances, and he with them.

Use 4. Fourthly, To refute the arrogancy or ignorance of the Separatists, who refuse to keep fellowship with reformed churches, whom Christ yet keeps fellowship with. Shall man be more pure than his Maker? or the sons of mortal men more holy than the sons of God?

Use 5. Fifthly, To exclude the popish synagogues from the number of Christ's gardens; the gardens and churches of Christ, as they have Christ walking in them, so they know it, and profess it, and rejoice in it.

'I am my well-beloved's, and my well-beloved is mine', verse 3. The church of Rome disdains such a

song as heretical presumption to say, 'I am my well-beloved's, and he is mine'.

Use 6. Sixthly, This doth teach us, that when churches keep themselves close to Christ, and to the simplicity of his ordinances, that they can say, 'I am my well-beloved's, and he is mine'; Christ will keep himself powerful and gracious amongst them for their protection and comfort; he will not fail to show himself theirs, when they fail not to show themselves his.

Use 7. Seventhly, This may teach us not to wonder if Christian assemblies be at first suspected, as Tirzah, for sedition, separation, &c. It is the lot of God's church, which, when it groweth up to be better known, will appear to be, as it is, comely as Jerusalem.

Use 8. Eighthly, From the description of the church here by her members—eyes, hair, teeth, temples—gather here again in the same uses made of the like description, chapter 4:13, in uses 2, 3, 4, there expressed.

Use 9. Ninthly, Observe the reformed churches to be the same that the primitive church in Christ's time was in sundry principal members and respects, and therefore the same members in the same sort described word for word; yea, such fellowship as the church of the Jews had with Christ coming out of Babylon, the same have the reformed churches with Christ coming out of Romish Babylon, chapter 2;16, and 6:3.

'There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number', verse 8.

This verse contains the last part of the description of the estate of the reformed churches, which is a comparison of them together amongst themselves; of whom some are,

First, Queens, and they are threescore.

Secondly, Concubines, and they are fourscore.

Thirdly, Damsels, and they without number.

Secondly, One is eminent above them all unto Christ: first, A dove; secondly, Undeified.

Secondly, Herself one.

Thirdly, Her mother, an only choice one.

Fourthly, Her daughter, blessed.

Fifthly, The queens and concubines commended her.

'There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines,

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and damsels, or virgins, without number', verse 8.

Queens differ from concubines in four respects:

First, Queens, or chief wives, are taken into fellowship with their royal husbands by solemn stipulation, and with consent and solemn rejoicing of friends. The concubines are not so, as Bilhah and Zilpah, &c., Genesis 29:22. A man takes such to him rather by right of dominion than by fellowship of wedlock.

Secondly, Queens, or chief wives, bring with them dowries to their husbands, 1 Kings 9:16; Acts 3.

Hence Lesbonius to Lusitolo, in matrimony, would not give his sister *sine dote*, without dowry, lest he should seem to give her in *in concubinatum potius quam in matrimonium*. But concubines were taken without dowry for the most part, as Hagar, Bilhah, Zilpah, &c.

Thirdly, Chief wives had the keys of the families in their own hands; they had government of the house under and with their husbands. Hence it is that Hagar, though called Abraham's wife, yet is said to be in Sarah's

hand, Genesis 16:3, who also corrected her, verse 6; the angel calleth her Sarah's maid, verse 7; and she calleth Sarah her mistress, verse 8, as likewise the angel doth, verse 9.

Concubines, though secondary wives, yet were but as servants, save only they were admitted to the fellowship of the bed.

Fourthly, Chief wives brought forth children, to whom belonged the inheritance; whereas concubines' children had, for the most part, only some gifts given them, Genesis 25:5-6. That Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, had inheritances among their brethren, was by extraordinary dispensation.

Queens then are such reformed congregations where such properties of queens are found. Christ, indeed, looks for no dowry from us for his own use; he needeth nothing of ours, neither have we anything to give him, but our own nakedness, filthiness, and beggary, Ezekiel 16:5-6. Here therefore look at Christ in the persons of the ministers, whose vicegerents they are, and ambassadors also; and in whose name they, being married to the churches, do beget children to Christ, 1 Corinthians 4:15; though ministers considered in comparison with Christ; they are

but as the friends of the bridegroom, not bridegrooms themselves, John 3:29. Such churches then, and congregations, are queens, whom the ministers and congregations do, with mutual free consent, choose either the other; as when the people do give up themselves, first, to the Lord, and then to the ministers by the will of God, 2 Corinthians 8:5. Of this sort are sundry congregations in England, and very many in the reformed foreign churches. Other congregations, which have ministers thrust upon them without their liking and consent, and whom ministers have to them by some clandestine conveyances, are more like to concubines.

Again, such congregations as come to their ministers with a good dowry, and comfortable and honourable maintenance, they are like wives. Others who bring little or no maintenance with them, are like to concubines, though indeed the former condition is more essential to lawful marriage; to wit, free consent and mutual stipulation on both sides; for as sometimes lawful wives have but poor dowries, and concubines sometimes bring large maintenance with them, so some congregations that freely consent to the acceptance of their ministers can allow them but slender maintenance, whereas some others upon whom ministers thrust themselves are richly endowed. Furthermore, such congregations

as enjoy the power of the keys, they are as queens, lawful wives. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are,

First, The one of knowledge, Luke 11:52.

Secondly, The other of jurisdiction, Matthew 18:18, and both of them mentioned, Matthew 16:19.

Where, then, a congregation enjoyeth a faithful ministry, opening an entrance into the kingdom of heaven to penitent believers, and shutting it against impenitent hypocrites and scandalous livers, there the power of the keys is not wanting; and if withal they have liberty exercising jurisdiction, there is their queen-like or wife-like authority more complete. Of this sort are divers, both English and foreign churches, though sundry German churches, dispensing the keys of knowledge more corruptly in their doctrine of the sacrament and predestination, and neglecting the use of excommunication, do rather turn to the condition of concubines.

But such churches as have no preachers, or such

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as have no power in their gifts to open and shut the kingdom of heaven to the conscience and souls of men, they are as concubines.

Lastly, Such congregations where the people remain still ignorant in darkness, and are not brought on to be begotten of God by the lively word of regeneration, but continue altogether ignorant, worldly, and profane, they are as concubines, whose children inherit not, though God may give them outward blessings; but such congregations where the word is lively to the begetting of souls to an immortal inheritance, they are lawful wives, yea, queens. Of this sort our English and foreign churches have many, God be blessed, though the church of Sardis hath but a few names, Revelation 3:4.

'Damsels are without number', &c. Damsels or virgins in this marriage song are of less reckoning, as being yet either not spoken to in way of marriage by Christ and his ministers, or coyly refusing him. Of this sort there were many churches at the first reforming of the gospel, to whom, for want of ministers, readers were sent; whence one of the martyrs wished that every able minister might have ten congregations committed to his charge, till further provision could be made; so that such churches there were, even ten to one, abundantly many, that scarcely heard of Christ's knocking at their hearts by any conscionable ministry; yea, and how many be there at this day that either do want such ministers as do

espouse them to Christ, or else do coyly deny their motions, and stand out against Christ and their ministers?

Of queens he reckoneth threescore, of concubines fourscore. A certain number put for an uncertain; and of churches, the less pure the greater.

Damsels he reckons without number:

First, Partly because they have been exceeding many of them, and are still too many.

Secondly, Partly because Christ maketh no account of them, as if they were with him *nullius numeri*, not worth the reckoning.

'But my dove, my undefiled is one', &c., verse 9. A dove is noted,

First, For her chastity;

Secondly, Mildness, or innocency, Matthew 10:10. Such are those churches which go not a-whoring after any superstition or idolatry, nor exercise that captivity

of tyranny over their sister churches which the popish watchmen are taxed for, chapter 5:7, that smote and wounded the members of the churches for seeking after Christ, and took her veil from her, which are unspotted, undefiled, either,

First, Of Romish pollutions, or,

Secondly, Of worldly courses.

'Is one.' Such congregations are,

First, Few, as one to sixty or eighty.

Secondly, At unity, or brotherly love one with another, as one body, though scattered into many places, as England, Scotland, Germany, &c. In all Christendom some churches are more chaste, mild, and unspotted than others, even of the same country; and yet such are but few, and though few, yet at entire unity, as one body.

'The only one of her mother, the choicest one of her that bare her', verse 9. In the Hebrew phrase the whole is the mother, the parts are the members. The true catholic church of Christ is the mother of all reformed daughters; and these daughter-churches that are most chaste and mild, and undefiled, they are best esteemed, and best beloved of the mother catholic church, as coming nearest to her in chastity, innocency, purity, &c.

'The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her', verse 9. These daughters, whether they be the members of the unspotted churches mentioned in the former verse, either of both, together with these churches that are as queens and

concubines, do give honourable testimony of these congregations that are most reformed, and with them all prosperity, the good things of this life, and a better.

To bless is more than to praise: praise is the acknowledging of any good thing in her, but blessing is the acknowledgment,

First, Of divine good things; and,

Secondly, Those drawing the churches and themselves therein nearer to God.

‘Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?’ &c., verse 10–13. In these verses the calling and arising of the church of the Jews is described by six arguments:

First, By the unexpectedness of her arising, joined with the admiration of it: ‘Who is she that looketh forth?’ verse 10.

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Secondly, by the place of her arising: the morning, or the east countries.

Thirdly, by the degrees and beauty of her grace:

First, Fresh as the morning.

Secondly, Fair as the moon.

Thirdly, Bright and clear as the sun.

Fourthly, ‘Terrible as an army with banners’, verse 10.

Fourthly, By Christ’s visitation of her, with the end of it, verse 11.

Fifthly, By the unexpected helps which this church found for her return, verse 12.

Sixthly, By the earnestness of her calling given her: Return, return, four times repeated.

‘Who is this that looketh forth?’ These words express the unexpected admirable arising of a new church, chapter 3:6; and that after the reformed churches of the Gentiles. She is a Shulamite, alluding to Salem, the ancient name of Jerusalem, the mother city of the Jews.

This church then thus arising is that of the Jews which we look for; whose beginning, for sudden conversion of multitudes, shall be admirable to themselves and others, Isaiah 66:8, and 49:12.

‘As the morning.’ Her arising is resembled by the morning,

First, Because this church shall arise from the eastern countries, Revelation 16:12.

Secondly, Her arising shall be like a new resurrection from the dead, Romans 11:15.

Thirdly, Her arising shall be speedily, as the same phrase intimates, Isaiah 58:8, and 60:19–20.

‘Fair as the moon, bright as the sun.’ ‘The moon is fair by beauty communicated to her from the sun’, Isaiah 6:12,20, and 24:23. In the sun’s brightness is light, heat, refreshing, and all in a glorious manner, Isaiah 33:24, and 60:21. The citizens of that church shall all at that time, or at least the body of them, have their sins forgiven them by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, Isaiah 59:21; Zechariah 14:20–21. They shall enjoy abundant light of heavenly knowledge. They shall excel in purity of holiness. They shall abound in consolations, to the refreshing of themselves and others, Isaiah 66:10–11.

‘Terrible as an army with banners.’ Read Revelation 19:14,21. The armies of the Jews shall be terrible

to the Turks and Tartars, Ezekiel 38 and 39, and to the false prophet then driven from Rome by ten Christian princes, and associating himself to the Turk for succour.

‘I went down into the garden of nuts.’ The Jewish synagogues, so called because of that veil of hardness and blindness drawn over their hearts, as it were a hard nut-shell over the kernel, Romans 11:8,10; 2 Corinthians 3:14–15.

‘To see the fruits of the valleys.’ Valleys lying in the shade between two mountains bring forth fruit late: so the Jews are long before they bring forth fruit unto Christ.

‘To see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.’ The Jews, that for hardness of heart are like a garden of nuts, yet when their conversion shall be wrought, will be as vines and pomegranates, bring forth sweet and wholesome fruits to the refreshing of God and man, Judges 9:13.

‘Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.’ Or set me upon the chariots of a willing people; not that anything cometh at unawares to Christ in his own person; but because to his ministers, that in his name shall go into this garden of nuts, the Jews shall appear unexpectedly, prepared to embrace Christ’s calling: they shall find the Jews as chariots of willing people, ready to march with them whithersoever in Christ’s name they shall call; their soul should no sooner desire it, but they should be set in all readiness. Where also is intimated the willing readiness of a willing people among the Gentiles to convey

the Jews into their country, with chariots, and horses, and dromedaries, Isaiah 66:20, and 49:23–24.

‘Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies’, verse 13.

‘Return, return, O Shulamite; return.’ This call, so often repeated, Isaiah 62:6–7, doth imply,

First, The earnestness of the ministers that shall call them.

Secondly, The haste that they would have them to make in going through with their conversion.

‘That we may look upon thee, or behold thee.’ It is the desire of the ministers, and of all the faithful,

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to behold this glorious church when she shall be called.

‘What will ye see in the Shulamite?’ But, as it were, the company of two armies, or the host of Mahanaim, Genesis 32:1–2.

This is spoken, either because the Jews shall, presently upon their conversion, marshal and rank themselves into armies against Gog and Magog, verse 10, where she is said to arise ‘terrible as an army with banners’. Or else, taking the word properly, the Holy Ghost compareth the Jews to a host of angels, which Jacob saw at Mahanaim, Genesis 32:1; Zechariah 12:8; as indeed the feeble at that day shall be as valiant as the angels of God. This interpretation seemeth to me to be the more likely, because her warlike provision was before mentioned, verse 10. Or otherwise, the Holy Ghost may allude to the host of Israel and Judah, which went to bring up David from Mahanaim to Jerusalem, after the Israelites were brought to see their errors in casting him off for Absalom, 2 Samuel 19:9–10, 14, 43; so shall the Jews at their conversion assemble for the establishment of the kingdom and throne of Christ among them, after they shall be brought to see their soul errors in casting off Christ so unworthily so long a time.

Use 1. The first use of this is for discerning a different estate of all Christian churches and congregations, and trial of our own parishes. In one of these ranks every congregation is found, either a queen, a concubine, or a damsel, or a dove: if we have freely consented to the entertainment of a faithful ministry, coming to us in the name of Christ; if we bring with us to him a sufficient dowry for his maintenance; if the word of God shall be powerfully dispensed amongst us, and the opening and

shutting of the kingdom of heaven, and withal the key of discipline be not neglected; if our congregations bring forth many children to God, partakers of the heavenly inheritance; then are our congregations as chief wives, as queens to Jesus Christ. But if our ministers find not conjugal and free acceptance from us; if we be not willing to provide for them comfortable and honourable maintenance; if the word be not so dispensed that the people may find themselves in good or evil estates; if our congregations bring not forth regenerate Christians

to partake of the heavenly inheritance, then are they but as concubines in the sight of God; if we have yet no ministers that woo us, and beseech us to be reconciled to Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:20; or if they do, yet we coyly put them off with delays, or refuses, then are we damsels, but neither queens nor concubines. But if we find all the properties of queens belonging unto us, and withal find a love and care to keep ourselves chaste to Christ, and innocent to man, and undefiled, and unspotted, both of the world and of Rome, then are we doves to Christ Jesus, choicest children of the true catholic church.

Use 2. A second use is for a discerning of a different estate of all Christian souls, and trial of our own estates before God. If our hearts have never yet been called and knocked at by the lively word of God's ordinances, or if we have coyly put off our repentance to this day, or refuse to hearken to Christ, then are we damsels. If we bring forth seed of righteousness to Christ, by reason we are under the government of such who will require it, and well may command it of us, we are but as concubines. But if we freely condescend to receive and embrace Christ into our hearts with entire conjugal affection, and give up ourselves to him to bring forth the fruits of his Spirit, and are enabled to govern ourselves and families after his will, then are we royal spouses unto Christ Jesus, and keep ourselves to Christ chaste, innocent, and undefiled, and endeavour to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, 2 Corinthians 7:1; then are we as doves unto Jesus Christ.

Use 3. A third use, to direct and instruct ministers and people how to approve themselves and their congregations in best sort unto Christ. Let not ministers thrust themselves upon their people against their consents, but let their people freely accept them, and comfortably maintain them; let the ministers be faithful in dispensing God's ordinances, and the people obedient to give up themselves to Christ and his truth, till both grow

up to heavenly and holy purity of worship and life; so shall our congregations be as queens and doves to Jesus Christ.

Use 4. A fourth use may be to encourage men to ways of spotless innocency; they are not disgraceful,

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but blessed of the faithful, and praised even of them that are without.

Use 5. Fifthly, To reprove the children of the separation, who reproach the church instead of blessing or praising them.

Use 6. Sixthly, This may teach us to expect a powerful and glorious calling of the Jews in all the particulars before described: say, They be now, as Gideon's fleece, dry; when the Gentiles are moistened with heavenly dew, they shall again be moistened when we shall seem dry in comparison of them. Though Leah step first into Jacob's bed, and so the less comely church of the Gentiles into the fellowship with Christ, yet the church of the Jews, as beautiful as Rachel, shall in the end find fellowship with Christ.

The glory of their calling appears in the text, because the Holy Ghost describes her by comparisons, not fetched from earthly flowers, or metals, or jewels, but from heavenly lights, the morning, moon, sun.

It appeareth further in their unexpected and free readiness to embrace Christ.

The power of their calling appears in their earnestness and zeal of their ministry, in breaking the hard shell of their hearts wherewith they were formerly enclosed, verse 11; in stirring them up to fight manfully and terribly God's battles against the enemies of the church, verse 13.

The Lord speedily hasten the coming of this Shulamite, that we may behold her! Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TEXT.

Verse 1. How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.

Verse 2. Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.

Verse 3. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.

Verse 4. Thy neck is as a tower of ivory, thine eyes are like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim:

thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.

Verse 5. Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.

Verse 6. How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

Verse 7. This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

Verse 8. I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples;

Verse 9. And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

Verse 10. I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

Verse 11. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.

Verse 12. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.

Verse 13. The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

THE EXPLANATION.

This chapter, to the end of the fourth verse of the eighth chapter, describeth a fourfold estate of the Jewish church. When they shall come to be converted unto the Lord; to wit,

First, As it shall be in gathering and growing up, verses 1, 5.

Secondly, As it shall be grown up to her stature and maturity, verses 6-7.

Thirdly, As it shall be further enlarged by the access of the Gentiles, verses 8, 10.

Fourthly, As it shall multiply and stretch itself into the country villages, and throughout the land of Israel, verse 11; verse 4 of chapter 8.

That in verse 11 the church inviteth Christ, and with him herself, to have recourse into the country villages, is plain in the words of the former verses, which set forth a threefold estate of the Shulamite converted, is evident by the repetition of the verses,

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verses 3, 7–8, and all with some difference; and the breasts are so described, verse 3, and set forth an unsettled ministry, quickly stirring up and down to gather this church and the scattered members of it.

This church then in gathering is described by ten parts; feet, joints of thighs, navel, belly, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head, hair.

‘How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman’, verse 1.

‘How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter!’ In her feet shod with shoes there is a threefold beauty; for it implieth,

First, Her return out of captivity; as, on the contrary, bare feet is a sign of going into captivity, Isaiah 20:1–4; Deuteronomy 25:9.

Secondly, Her challenging and recovery of her lost inheritance in Israel, Ruth 4:7–8.

Thirdly, Her walking in that peace of conscience which the gospel preparereth, Ephesians 4:15; whereas he that walketh barefoot either gathereth a thick brawny skin upon the soles of his feet; or if his feet be more tender, he pricketh them ever and anon with thorns, or Little sharp stones, as scruples. A conscience not furnished with true peace, either waxeth senseless and brawny, or else scrupulous and anxious. All the three things are beautiful and glorious; as, on the contrary, it is a great disturbance and deformity to go into captivity, to sell and forego a man’s inheritance, to walk unquietly and uncomfortably. And if it be beautiful and glorious to return out of bodily captivity, and to recover the earthly inheritance, how much more is it together with these outward things to join a return out of spiritual captivity, and recovery of an everlasting inheritance, as the Jews shall do at their conversion!

‘O prince’s daughter!’ So called,

First, Because they are born of God, the Prince of princes.

Secondly, The Jews converted shall be of much glory and authority, even as the kings of the earth, Revelation 16:12.

'The joints of thy thighs', &c. The word signifies whole bones of the thighs; they, for their apt and ready turning in their conversion to God, are like well-wrought precious jewels, the work of the hand

of God, the spiritual workman of all the works of the church.

'Thy navel', &c.; 'thy belly is like', &c. The navel and belly are both hidden parts, not conspicuous to them without, and therefore set forth the two mysteries or sacraments of the church, baptism and the Lord's supper. The navel, serving for the nourishing of the infant in the womb, resembleth baptism, nourishing infants, and new-born babes in the womb of the church.

It wanteth not liquor,

First, Of the Spirit of Christ to sanctify and cleanse us from sin.

'The belly', to wit, the Lord's supper, 'is as an heap of wheat', for store of excellent, and sweet, and fine nourishment, 'set about with lilies'; because only the faithful, pure Christians shall be admitted to partake in that sacrament.

The Lord's table shall not be set about with weeds, profane and scandalous sinners, but with lilies, worthy communicants.

'Thy two breasts (the teachers of that church) are like two young roes.' For their agility, skipping up and down to suckle the converts, implying that the first ministry of the Jews, at the conversion of that people, shall rather be as the evangelists, bound to no certain place, than as pastors fixed to any settled congregation, which yet outwardly they shall be.

'That are twins.'

First, For their likeness in disposition.

Secondly, Brotherly equality.

'Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus,' verse 4.

'Thy neck is as a tower of ivory.' The neck, as above, chapter 4:4, is the faith of the church, joining Christ and his church together, as the neck doth the head and body.

As a tower, for strength; of ivory, for preciousness, for which faith is commended, 1 Peter 1:7; 2 Peter 1:1.

'Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim.' For the abundance of water, meaning teachers, that they shall

yield, even tears of repentance, at their conversion, partly for the great wrong they had done our Saviour, partly

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to consider the unspeakable and undeserved kindness of God towards them, Zechariah 12:10; Jeremiah 3:8, 9, and 50:4.

‘Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus.’ There was a double house of the forest of Lebanon, the one in Jerusalem, built by Solomon, so called by way of resemblance, in which he put his golden shields, whence Shishak taking them, is said to take them out of Jerusalem, 1 Kings 7:2, 10:17, and 14:25–26: of this house speaketh Isaiah, chapter 22:8.

There was another house built in the forest of Lebanon, as appeareth by this place, which is said to look toward Damascus, to distinguish it from the other which is in Jerusalem.

Lebanon itself stood in the utmost confines of Israel, northwards towards Syria; and therefore this house built in Lebanon is said to look toward Damascus, the chief city of Syria. Now Lebanon being full of all manner of sweet and fragrant trees, and shrubs, and spices, the tower built in Lebanon must needs be compassed with the sweet-smelling odours, to the great refreshing and delight of such as should lodge in it.

Hence the nose of this pure church is compared to this tower, because they that dwell in this church shall be wonderfully refreshed with the sweet odours of the ministry, 2 Corinthians 2:15, which is the sweet savour of life unto life; as also with the savoury conference of good Christians, and their faithful and godly conversation.

‘Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries’, verse 5.

‘Thine head upon thee is like Carmel.’ Carmel excelled for fruit, and fullness in feeding cattle, and therefore is reckoned, with Lebanon, and Sharon, and Bashan, famous for fertility, Isaiah 3:39, and 35:2; 1 Samuel 15:17.

The head of the church under Christ is the civil magistrate, The meaning then is, that the magistrate of this church shall yield store of sound and sweet nourishment to the people, by giving and maintaining free passage to each holy ordinance of God, and also by wholesome laws; and, lastly, by good example of godly life.

‘The hair of thy head like purple.’ The hair, whether it be the common Christian’s of the church that hang upon Christ, or the officers or servants that hang upon the magistrates of that church, they are like purple.

First, Not only dyed in crimson blood of Christ, Isaiah 33:24, and 63:1;

Secondly, But also of a royal hue, as purple is a princely dye; all of them as princes, chapter 7:1; Zechariah 12:8; Revelation 16:12; Isaiah 60:17–18.

The officers and exacters shall be peace and righteousness.

These officers shall not basely shark for bribes, nor exact for fees, nor oppress for filthy lucre, nor pick holes in men’s estates to trouble the people and enrich themselves; but, like purple-clothed princes, be like their ministers, and honour both their ministers and themselves with peace and righteousness.

‘The king is held in the rafters’, chapter 1:17. For so the word is turned before, where the rafters were understood partly of the temple. *Held* is always, to my remembrance, used for holding by constraint, bound as a prisoner. The meaning may be, then, that the king or chief magistrate is bound to be present at the ordinances of God in the temple. The prince is commanded to go in with them; when they go out, he shall go out with them together, Ezekiel 46:10, he shall come in with the first and go out with the last. Or what if it imply that their greatest magistrates shall submit themselves to be bound with the censures of the church, according to that where the psalmist telleth of binding of kings with the ordinances of God in the church, Psalm 149:6, 8, and 9:5. And Isaiah foretelleth that kings and queens shall bow down their faces towards the earth unto the church, and lick the dust of their feet, Isaiah 49:21. Both their interpretations stand well together.

Use 1. First, This doth show us how to come and appear beautiful in the eyes of the Lord Jesus, which is when we turn our feet from the estate and ways and bondage of sin and Satan, and come out of the captivity into the liberty of his children, when we claim our inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, seeking after it above all earthly blessings, and walking towards it; when we walk confidently in a Christian course, then Christ admireth our beauty.

How beautiful are thy goings with shoes, O prince’s daughter! Yea, Christ then esteemeth us as princes’

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children: what matter then if foolish men account us peasants, and our going with shoes as strait in the instep? But we stand not nor fall not to their judgments, but to his who shall judge us to eternal happiness or misery at the last day, Matthew 5:18. His word must stand when heaven and earth shall fall. If he account us vessels of honour, we are so indeed; who is it that dishonoureth us? 2 Timothy 2:21. If men should cast a vessel of gold or silver into the mire and trample upon it, yet the vessel is still a vessel of honour, good, and rich, and precious; the mire may easily be washed off from such vessels. Be not discouraged, then, from Christian courses, by foolish fears of reproach. The truth is, if we go on in sin, Christ esteemeth of us as base peasants, as ugly and abominable in his sight; naked, bare, deformed, and defiled; yea, he esteemeth our goings as going barefoot, which either, first, brawneth our feet with a thick skin, that thereby we grow insensible and feel nothing; or, secondly, pricketh us with unnecessary scruples and fears.

Use 2. Secondly, We may from hence observe to whom the praise of the conversion of the forwardest Christians is due; to wit, to the hands of a cunning workman, the God of power and peace. We might be also called as often to return as the Shulamite in the last verse of the former chapter; and yet, unless this cunning workman put the bones of our thighs into joint, we shall not return to him.

Use 3. Further, See here the use of baptism, even to infants. The Anabaptists object that infants can receive no benefit by it, because they yet receive no understanding, no benefit by the word; as if infants cannot receive nourishment by the navel, though they can neither take, nor chew, nor suck meat with hand or mouth. Baptism is the navel by which infants are nourished in the church.

Use 4. Fourthly, From this navel never wanting liquor; observe, there doth never want just matter of instruction and comfort to be fetched from our baptism against all temptations. Doth Satan detain thee from obeying thine effectual calling? Remember in baptism from thine infancy thou wast admitted into the family of Christ. Doth he trouble thee with fears and doubts that thy sins are not pardoned? Behold thy baptism is full of liquor of Christ's blood to justify thee from all thy sins. Doth

Satan tempt thee to defile thyself with any sin? Behold thou art washed solemnly in baptism from all sin, and wilt thou defile thyself against thy baptism?

Use 5. Fifthly, In the Lord's supper see what plenty of excellent, sound, and sweet nourishment is offered to us, even a heap of wheat. Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, John 6:55. There is all-sufficient nourishment for a hungry soul; this serveth to quicken our appetite to this heavenly banquet.

Use 6. Sixthly, Observe what manner of persons should be admitted to the Lord's table, and how we should prepare ourselves thereto. This heap of wheat is not to be set about with stinking weeds, but with fair lilies. Cleanse ourselves then from all scandalous sins, yea, and from all secret sins, to our best endeavours, so shall we be set about this heap of wheat, the Lord's table.

Seventhly, Note that ministers, to be like roes, skipping up and down to gather and suckle the children of the church, is fitter for a church in gathering than convenient in a church constituted; for then the breasts hang in their place like clusters of grapes upon the branches of the vine, verse 7–8. But they must be breasts giving suck, not dry nurses; that is their duty in every estate of the church. Or, if their people be grown up in Christ to fitness for strong meat, then they to be full in a stronger liquor than milk, as clusters of grapes, full of wines.

Eighthly, See the beauty and commendation of three cardinal graces:

First, Faith, to be,

First, strong.

Secondly, Precious; applying the precious promises, and making us rich with them.

Secondly, Repentance, to abound in brokenness of spirit through godly sorrow, melting into abundance of tears, or other affections suitable thereto.

Thirdly, Obedience, to be,

First, Fragrant.

Secondly, And that with all manner of sweet fruits and good, that all that converse with us may smell a sweet savour from our conversation.

Use 9. Ninthly, Mark here a lesson for magistrates to be as Carmel, yielding some sweet and plentiful nourishment to the people.

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First, By procuring free passage to God's ordinances, whence Jehoshaphat's nobles are said to teach, 2 Chronicles 1:7, and 7:9.

Secondly, By making wholesome laws.

Thirdly, By giving good example of life, to have no officers hanging about them of base demeanour, exacters, promoters, contentious persons, but such as may execute it themselves and their ministers. And for public ordinances of God's worship, it is no disparagement to magistrates to behave themselves reverently in them, and to submit themselves unto them as unto Christ.

Use 10. Tenthly, From this complete description of the beauty of the church in all her parts, observe,

First, That the church was never so completely beautiful in all her parts as it shall be when the Jews are called. The apostolic primitive church, though all fair, yet wanted this head-like Carmel, a Christian magistrate, yea, and some purity of the sacrament, 1 Corinthians 11:20.

Secondly, In that he beginneth this description from the feet, and so ascendeth to the head in order. It may seem the calling of the Jews shall begin at first rather with some of the lowest people, and so ascend higher and higher to more eminent persons.

Thirdly, In that the church neither here, where so many of her members are set forth, nor in all this song, is described by the beauty of her hands or fingers, we must not gather that therefore this church will be barren of good works. God forbid; but rather conceive Christ concealeth the mention of her hands, to wit, her works, partly,

First, Because the harlot of Rome so delighteth so much to boast of her hands, of her works, which indeed she wants. Christ had rather his church should abound in good works in silence than boast of them, especially when they are wanting.

Secondly, Because it is he alone, and not we, that worketh all our works for us, Isaiah 26:12; Hosea 14:8; John 15:5.

'How fair', &c., chapter 7:6, and 8:4.

In these verses the Holy Ghost goes on to describe the second estate of the Jews' church, as is spoken above, chapter 7:1, in verse 6-7, as grown up to her full stature and maturity.

For, first, Beauty is not observed till full growth; now here her beauty is admired, verse 6.

Secondly, Her stature is expressly mentioned to be a palm-tree, verse 7.

Thirdly, Her breasts are here mentioned again, verse 7, to show that he speaketh not of the same estate of the church as afore. Besides, the breasts yielding wine instead of milk, it is a sign the church shall then be grown to more maturity and fitness to be fed with stronger meat.

The church of the Jews, then come to her fuller growth, is here described:—

First, By her beauty, which is admirable: ‘How fair!’ and joined with pleasure: ‘How pleasant art thou!’ especially for public worship so described, verse 6.

Secondly, By her stature, resembled to a palm-tree, verse 7.

Thirdly, Her breasts resembled to clusters of grapes, verse 7.

The third estate of this church, as it shall be further enlarged by the access of the Gentiles, is described, verse 8, 10; and that,

First, By Christ’s climbing this palm-tree, and taking hold of the boughs of it, verse 8.

Secondly, By the rich supply of nourishment from her breasts, verse 8.

Thirdly, By the smell of her nose, resembled to apples, verse 8.

Fourthly, By the power of her doctrine, verse 9.

Fifthly, By her familiar fellowship with Christ, verse 10.

The fourth estate of this church, as it shall multiply and stretch itself into the country villages, is described, verse 11, to the fourth of the next chapter, and that,

First, By the occasion of this increase, the church’s invitement of Christ to visit the country villages, verse 11–12.

Secondly, By the affectionate service of this church to Christ, chapter 8:1–2.

Thirdly, By Christ’s affectionate embracing of her, verse 3.

Fourthly, By the church’s desire for the continuance of this estate without interruption, verse 4.

‘How fair, and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!’

‘How fair!’ The fairness and beauty of the church implieth suitably to what is found in the natural beauty of the body.

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First, A complete integrity of all the members of this church; where any member is wanting, there is deformity, beauty is blemished. This church shall want then no ordinances of God, nor any such members to whom the dispensation of each ordinance belongeth.

Secondly, A fit proportion of all the members of the church one to another; no swellings, no convulsions.

Thirdly, A good colour in the outward face of things, all carried decently and in order. 'How fair!' It implieth admirable beauty in all these respects

'How pleasant for delights!' This word implieth a ready willingness of this church to the public worship of God, which is here called delights, as being the marriage-bed wherein Christ most familiarly solaceth himself with his church.

This ready willingness of this church was foretold, Psalm 110:3; and the willingness of this people to any service of his is pleasant to him, 2 Corinthians 9:7.

'O love!' As if the church were so lovely that it were even love itself.

The five former verses described the church in her several members apart. This verse considereth the whole body met together in public duties.

'This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes', verse 7.

'This thy stature is like to a palm-tree.' This tree is eminent,

First, For her straightness.

Secondly, For her tallness.

Thirdly, For her perpetual greenness and fruitfulness, Jeremiah 17:8, as that,

Fourthly, For her thriving under weight pressing it down.

Fifthly, For her easiness to be climbed, having many boughs whereon to stay hands and feet. So shall the church be eminent for uprightness therein, for growing up even against all oppositions of Gog and Magog, for ready entertaining of all the faithful that shall come to her.¹

'Thy breasts are like the clusters of the vine grapes.' Their ministers such like in four respects:

First, Not few, as afore, two young roes, but many, as clusters.

¹ Plin., lib. xiii. cap. 4.

Secondly, Not stirring up and down, as roes, from place to place, but hanging in their places.

Thirdly, Full of strong liquor of sound doctrine.

Fourthly, Requiring some pressure in urging, though little, before they empty themselves, but upon easy pressure doing it plentifully.

'I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples', verse 8.

'I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof.' Christ speaks of himself, to imply the readiness of his members to resort and flock to this church of the Jews; for what Christ's members do by the guidance of his Spirit, he accounteth it his own action. This forwardness of the Gentiles to ascend and resort to Jerusalem is elsewhere foretold more plainly, Zechariah 8:23; Isaiah 60:8-11.

'Now also thy breasts as the clusters of the vine.' And that is, notwithstanding the plenteous access of the Gentiles to the church, there shall be no defect of ministers to teach and feed them all; but there shall be still a large supply of store, sweet and plentiful teachers, as clusters of grapes to refresh them all.

'And the smell of thy nose like apples.' Notwithstanding this plenteous access of the Gentiles, the life of common Christians untainted with heathenish and popish unsavoury pollutions, yet the church herself, and they that live in it, shall smell a fragrant savour of the good conversation of the people.

'The smell of thy nose.' Not which the nose yieldeth, but which is yielded to the nose, to thy savoury discerning shall be sweet and comfortable, as that of apples.

Before, when this church consisted of her own people, her smell was as that of Lebanon, verse 4; and now, by the access of the Gentiles, it shall not be corrupt. Indeed, when the Israelites came out of Egypt, the mingled of the Gentiles with them drew them away to murmuring and lusting; for this compare Exodus 12:38 with Numbers 11:4. But no such contagion shall accrue to this church by the mingling of the Gentiles with them.

'And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine

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for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak', verse 9.

'And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine.' Hebrews, Like good wine going to my beloved most straightly and rightly. That is, the doctrine of the church shall be as ever any most sweet, and powerful, and comfortable, and generous wine; it shall ever go or tend directly to Christ, always aiming at the preaching of him.

To go rightly or straightly implied the strength and generousness of wine when it sparkleth upward in the cup, as Proverbs 23:31, which here expresseth the lively vigour of the church's doctrine in her preaching of Christ, 'causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak'. Such shall be the sweet and powerful efficacy of the doctrine of the church then, as shall cause the sleepy and drowsy professors, whether amongst us Gentiles or amongst the Jews, to open their mouths and speak plentifully to God's praise. When the apostles spake the wonderful works of God in strange tongues, some of the people thought them to be full of new wine; but they were deceived, and were willing so to account of them in mockery, Acts 2:11-13. But these people shall be full of new wine of the Spirit and word of God, to open their mouths to speak, as the apostles did, the wonderful works of God.

'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me', verse 10.

This profession of the church, that she is her beloved's, argueth,

First, Her familiar fellowship with Christ.

Secondly, Her faith or confidence of her interest in him, or his in her.

Thirdly, Her open profession of the same.

That his desire is towards her argueth the strength of his affection toward her, and it is the same word used, Genesis 3:16, and 4:7, which there implieth two things:

First, The strength of their affection to their husband and their elder brother.

Secondly, The subordination and dependence thereof upon their will. The former is here also meant; the latter doth not stand with the sovereignty and headship of Christ over his church, Ephesians 5:23-24, unless thus far, to intimate Christ's tender regard of the will and desire of his church,

as he would be as unwilling to deny them as loving husbands be to deny their wives anything.

'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages', verse 11.

In these words the church inviteth Christ to visit the country villages about her, implying,

First, Her prayers to Christ that with her he might lodge there, plant and set churches there.

Secondly, Her care to take and observe all opportunities to advance such a work.

'Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves', verse 12.

'Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish.' Meaning, if any opportunity should offer itself to plant religion amongst them, then Christ and she might be forward to further the same.

Thirdly, Her promise to Christ to employ her best endeavours to such a service.

'There will I give thee my loves.' The love of the church to Christ is especially seen in feeding his lambs and sheep, John 21:15. She therefore offereth to Christ free use of her dearest and best affections to set forward such a work.

Fourthly, Her discerning of some good beginning of such a work.

'The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved', verse 13.

'The mandrakes give a smell'; which is a country field herb, Genesis 30:14, yet amiable; which argueth some fruits to be gathered in the country.

'And at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old.' And therefore, out of the abundance of her own store, she can supply the country with all fit helps to her further gathering and establishment.

'Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.' She professeth her desire to employ all her store to Christ's advantage, and therefore abounding with ministers and other fit officers for gathering and establishing the country churches about her, she expresseth her readiness to bring them out to his service and use, as if they were some good household provision laid up by her for such a use. The access

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of the whole land of Israel to the city is profitable. The land shall be called Beulah, Isaiah 62:4, as well as the city Hephzibah, verses 10. A causeway is cast up for a mutual recourse of country to city.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TEXT.

Verse 1. Oh that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

Verse 2. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

Verse 3. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.

Verse 4. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

Verse 5. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

Verse 6. Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

Verse 7. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

Verse 8. We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?

Verse 9. If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

Verse 10. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

Verse 11. Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

Verse 12. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

Verse 13. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.

Verse 14. Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

THE EXPLANATION.

The church of the Jews, both in city and country thus gathered, do here express her ardent affection to Christ, and due respect of him, which the old synagogue showed towards her¹ whilst he was conversant amongst them in the flesh. Since, saith she, 'O that thou wert as my brother', &c. Christ was made our brother by taking our nature upon him at his incarnation, and then he sucked the breasts of the church, attending to the ministry of John and other Jewish teachers: she therefore, to show her affection, desireth that he were now amongst them, conversant in their streets again in bodily presence, she would not do then as the old synagogue did, be ashamed of him, or come to him by night; but she would kiss him, and embrace him in the open streets, and yet no man should then despise her for her so doing, as they did, John 4:48-49; but every one should encourage her in her obsequiousness to him. She would not reject him, and thrust him out of the synagogue, as her old ancestors had done, Luke 4:28-29; but if she found him without, she would lead him, and invite him into their synagogue, or temple, there to instruct her, and teach her the will of her Father. She would not give him gall to eat, and vinegar to drink, as her forefathers had done, Matthew 27:34; but she would cause him to drink of the best delicate spiced wine, and the juice of her pomegranate.

'His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me', verse 3.

The left hand of Christ is the Christian magistrate, which shall in those days support and advance the church, and hold up her head.

His right hand is the faithful ministers, which shall speak comfortable things to her heart, and so embrace her, Isaiah 62; Ezekiel 33:23-25; Daniel 7:27; for this also see chapter 2:6. 'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.'

The church, enjoying these great mercies and

¹ Question. 'Showed not towards him?'

blessings from Christ, chargeth all her daughters, members, to walk so thankfully and fruitfully towards God, and lovingly and helpfully one towards another, and so circumspectly and inoffensively to them which

are without, that no occasion be given of their alteration of their happy estate. When the church gave this charge before, it was in regard of the roes and hinds of the field, chapter 2:7, and 3:5; fearful Christians coming on towards religion, willing to flock, and feed, and converse with the sheep, yet ready to start and flee away upon any fear of danger of persecution; but now no regard is had of these fearful ones; for they that shall then remain fearful, when the church shall enjoy so great light and safety, they shall be quite excluded from conversing with the church, Isaiah 65:25.

For use we may here learn,

Use 1. First, since the church of the Jews shall attain to so great beauty, it ought to kindle our desire to pray earnestly for their conversion, that we may behold the admirable fairness thereof, and be delighted with her consolations, Isaiah 66:11–12.

Use 2. Secondly, This doth teach us how to approve ourselves pleasant and fair in Christ's eyes, even by keeping his ordinances in integrity and simplicity, and by a willing readiness to frequent the same.

Christ may see all the world, as he did when Satan showed it to him, Matthew 4:8–9; Luke 4:5–6, and yet not admire it; yea, condemn it for vanity, as it is, Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14, and 2:11, 15, 17, 19, 22, 26; but a well-ordered church, and ready, he admireth.

Use 3. Thirdly, Here learn the more straight and sincere, the more patient and meek, the more faithful, the more fruitful in all holy obedience, &c., the more do we attain to a palm-tree-like full stature of Christianity.

Use 4. Fourthly, It may learn and direct ministers to apply themselves to the estate of their people. If they be babes in Christ, to be as breasts of milk to suckle them; if they be grown to ripe years, to be as clusters of grapes to refresh them with stronger liquor, be ready to pour out sweet and comfortable liquor; but see some good calling to pressing you to it, let all your doctrine direct to Christ, and dispense it with such powerful efficacy of the Spirit, that the drowsy sluggard may be raised up to some fruitfulness, and more holy walking towards God.

Use 5. Fifthly, This may teach towns well provided for to lend their best care and help for the edifying and calling home of country villages: grudge not then at their ready resort to the gate of your assemblies, but rather encourage them, that they may be partakers with them.

Use 6. Sixthly, This lets us see that time shall come when forward profession shall be no disgrace; yea, men shall kiss Christ openly, and shall not be despised.

Use 7. Seventhly, The malignity of our ancestors against Christ and his gospel must provoke us to more embracing of him, and more subjection to him.

Use 8. Eighthly, We may here see that a faithful ministry and godly magistracy is a pledge of Christ's tender love, and kind embracing of the church.

Use 9. Ninthly, We are hence to take notice, that when a church enjoyeth many gracious and sweet blessings from Christ, it is good for her to see it and acknowledge it, and to be careful that all her members may so walk as their happiness be not interrupted. In the fourth verse the charge runneth thus, 'That ye stir not up', &c.; but in the Hebrew, 'Why should you stir up', &c. As who should say, When all things are thoroughly and fully reformed and settled, why should you go about any innovation? This manner of charge was never uttered before, chapter 2:7, to the end.

'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.'

'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?' In these words the Holy Ghost setteth out the calling and estate of two other churches after the calling of the Jews:

First, The one arising out of the wilderness, verses 5, 7.

Secondly, The other a little sister, verses 8, 10, together with the estate of the whole church, as it shall then stand, from that time to the end of the world, verses 11, 14.

This church coming up from the wilderness is described,

First, By the unexpectedness of her arising,

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And the means of the gathering of this church, being at first but an inferior magistrate, the church had more need and use of faith to lean upon her beloved, when sovereign authority did not countenance the work.

'There thy mother brought thee forth'; to wit, the mother-church of the Jews, or the catholic, which is the mother of us all, Galatians 4:26.

'Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame', verse 6.

'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.' That is, let me be deeply engraven as a seal is into thine heart, or affection, and

as a seal on thine arm, let me be continually in thy sight and remembrance. And because the heart is the seat of the will, and the arm of strength, therefore she desireth his deep affection and mighty strength and power always to be present with her for her comfort and peace.

‘For love is strong as death.’ Death showeth his strength,

First, In subduing all sorts of people, high and low, young and old.

Secondly, Accepting no compassion, nor yielding to any opposition, but going through with his work; such strength of love shall this church show to Christ, subduing all before her to the obedience of Christ, and not suffering any impediment to detain her from him.

‘Jealousy is cruel as the grave.’ Jealousy is a mixed affection of zeal or fervent love, and carries at any co-rivals a rage with wrath against them: so fervent then shall the zealous love of this church be to Christ, that she may not endure any such things as shall steal away the people’s hearts from Christ, or alienate or lessen his affection to her, but as the grave,

First, She shall devour all such things, and bury them out of sight; and,

Secondly, There hold them under for ever.

‘The coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame.’

The ardency of this love shall, as coals of fire,

First, Enflame her in all her services to Christ.

Secondly, Burn up as stubble all impediments.

First, All inward green lusts.

Secondly, Outward entanglements.

‘Vehement flame.’ Hebrews, Flames of God—that is, excellent or extraordinary; for in Scripture phrase the things of God are transcendently excellent, as the harps of God) Revelation 15:2, the trees of God, Psalm 1:3.

Flames of God, divine and vehement; and indeed this vehement love, being kindled by God’s heavenly Spirit, cannot be quenched with earthly things.

‘Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned’, verse 7.

That is, neither adversities, though never so many, or deep, or strong, as many waters and floods, shall withdraw this love from Christ; nor all the treasures, and pleasures, and credit which the substance of any man’s house might procure us, shall be of any reckoning in comparison of Christ, to withhold our hearts from him.

‘We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?’ verse 8.

‘We have a little sister’, &c. The church of Judea and Assyria, hearing of some good people growing up and coming on in Egypt, they are solicitous what course to take for them for their growth and establishment.

‘A little sister.’ In comparison of the Jews or Assyrians, for but five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and one of them shall be called the city of destruction, Isaiah 19:18.

‘And she hath no breasts.’ No ministers to give to them the sincere milk of the word, 1 Peter 2:2, or the means of consolation in their oppressions and distresses, Isaiah 9:20.

‘In the day when she shall be spoken for.’ When the fullness of time shall come, that she shall grow up to such a multitude of professors, as may be fit to have a settled church established amongst them; for there is a company grown up to be a fit spouse for Christ, when there are so many good Christians as may constitute a well-ordered church.

‘If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar’, verse 9.

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‘If she be a wall, we will build.’ That is, if she have a Christian magistracy; for the magistrate is a wall:

First, High, to keep out invasions of enemies; even so doth he keep out foreign evils from breaking in upon his people.

Secondly, Close, to keep in his people within bounds from breaking out into disorder.

Thirdly, Firm, whereon to rear, if occasion be, a silver palace, whereon to lay the frame of a good motion or course to be taken for public good.

Fourthly, A wall of partition, to divide between right and wrong, to give every man his own.

‘We will build upon her a silver palace.’ We will make her garment honourable and wealthy.

‘If she be a door’—that is, if she have faithful ministers, which as a door open the way to Christ, that the people may go in and out, and find pasture in him—‘we will inclose her with boards of cedar.’ Cedar is a timber that will neither rot, nor breed worms, and so will endure always; whence it was that the heathen made their *Simulacra deorum*,¹ images of their gods, of this wood, to make them seem eternal. These sister-churches then promise, that if their little sister of Egypt have any

faithful ministers, they will provide for their safety and peace, that they be not discouraged nor disturbed in their function.

‘I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour’, verse 10.

The little sister of Egypt resolveth her sisters that she wants neither Christian magistrates nor faithful ministers; so full of wholesome doctrine, as that her breasts swell like towers; which yet she acknowledgeth to be a singular mercy and favour of Christ, and ascribeth all her store to his praise: ‘Then was I as one that found favour in his eyes.’

‘Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon’, verse 11. A place so fruitful, that for excellency it was called the Lord of a multitude, or the owner of great increase. He let out the vineyard to keepers, who paid him a great rent, even thousands, for the fruit of it, and yet had a good portion, certain hundreds, for their own pains.

‘My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou,

¹ Plin. lib. xiii. cap. 5.

O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred,’ verse 12.

To wit, I let not out my vineyard to others, but I kept it myself always; let Solomon take his thou sands for his fruits of his vineyard, and the reapers their hundreds, I will not so do, but take all the pains to keep my vineyard, and reap all the gains of the fruits thereof to myself. The meaning is, when Christ hath gathered all these churches of the Jews, Assyrians, Egyptians, and neighbour nations, he will then keep his church with his mighty power, that neither dragons, nor wild boars, nor foxes shall hereafter root it up, or make havoc of it, as in time past they have done. This is expressly foretold, and shall come to pass after the destruction of leviathan, the great Turk, Isaiah 27:1–3.

‘Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it’, verse 13.

‘Thou that dwellest in the gardens.’ The participle being of the feminine gender, showeth that it is the church, not Christ, that is here spoken to, who is said to dwell in the garden; to wit, in the particular churches, as the sea dwelleth in each particular country sea—the German Sea, the Spanish Sea, the Baltic Sea, &c. So the catholic church is divided into particular churches, or the Jewish mother church dwelleth by her authority and directions in all other churches.

‘The companions hearkening to thy word (or voice) cause me to hear it.’ So the words in the original, which implieth either that church would have the mother-church of the Jews take care of all other Christian churches, and give directions unto them, and yet not as unto her handmaids, but as to her companions; or else, if the words be read according to the translation, ‘The companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it’; they imply that, after the calling of these churches, this shall be their constant estate to the world’s end, as they shall all,

First, Embrace one another as companions, not claiming Romish supremacy.

Secondly, Hearken to the voice and directions of the mother-church in Solomon’s days for wisdom to him.

Thirdly, Continue in calling upon the name of Christ without dissipation and interruption to the end.

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‘Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountain of spices’, verse 14.

This is the prayer of all the churches; now that all things are accomplished, the which prophets and apostles have foretold, that Christ would hasten his last coming as swiftly and quickly as the swiftest of the creatures, the roe, or young hart, to take them up with himself into the highest heavens of the mountains of spices, where are all manner of spices, where are all manner of sweet and fragrant and pleasant things, even fullness of joy at God’s right hand for evermore, Psalm 16:11. Thus in the end of the Revelation: ‘The Spirit and the bride’, and every faithful soul saith in like sense, ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,’ Revelation 22:17,20.

Use 1. The use of this is, first, To teach us that the nations of the Gentiles shall not be cast off from the fellowship of the church when the Jews are called, as the Jews were cast out of the church that the Gentiles might be grafted in, Romans 11:19–20; but even after their calling, new churches of the Gentiles shall be brought in; yea, their conversion shall bring life from the dead into the world: ‘What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?’ Romans 11:12,15; yea, the Gentiles shall bring their glory to it, Revelation 21:24; yea, the cursed Canaanite shall not be excluded from partaking in this blessing, Ezekiel 16:55,60–61. How much more may we hope than that these churches of Christendom, which have suffered so much with Christ, and for him, under the dragon, the beast,

and the Turk, shall partake with the glory of these churches of the Jews when the time shall come?

Use 2. Secondly, This doth teach us how to attain fellowship and holy familiarity with Christ, even by faith, leaning upon him as our beloved; infidelity and doubting hinder our sweet communion with Christ, labour we therefore to abandon it from us.

Use 3. Thirdly, We may here see the duty of inferior magistrates what it is, even to see that the church be raised up under them, how much more to countenance and protect it with their shadow, and to comfort it with the fruit of their sweet and wholesome laws and examples!

Use 4. Fourthly, This may serve for trial of the goodness of our affections to Christ; if we thirst

after his deep affection to us, and continual remembrance of us, if we labour to subdue ourselves and all ours to him, if we jealously war against all that which might impair our love to him, if we burn up all our impediments, if no afflictions can discourage us from him, if no prosperity can shake our entire desires after him, we are then well affected to him as this church is. If we desire to have such deep place in Christ's heart, it is a plain sign Christ hath a deep place in our hearts.

Use 5. Fifthly, This may show us a means how to consume all base and kitchen loves and lusts in us, set upon these sensual worldly things; grow up in this spiritual love to Christ, and it will swallow up and consume these lesser fires; the greater light will extinguish the lesser, as the sun will put out the kitchen fire; so this strong fire of Christ's love in us will burn up, and eat out all lust in us.

Use 6. Sixthly, This may comfort the true church and children of God, in assurance of their perseverance. If our love to him be so unchangeable, that many waters of afflictions cannot quench it, nor floods of temptations drown it; if it be so strong as death, that it will devour all before it, how much more is his love to us!

Use 7. Seventhly, This lets us see that the churches that are well-established themselves must not contemn their weak neighbour churches, but take care, and use all good means for their establishment and growth. How far should greater churches be from cutting off the breasts, or breaking down the walls of their small neighbour churches!

Use 8. Eighthly, This may teach magistrates to be as walls to keep out all disorder. Stand up as a wall if there come in disorders; stand so high that they cannot come over. If any would go a-begging, keep them in;

restrain beggary, idleness, drunkenness, whoredom, and profaneness, all civil courses; be as a wall. whereon to rear a silver palace for ever; whereon to lay the frame of a good motion, course, or order, to be taken for the public good; any good motion made, or to be made, is as a wall to divide equally to all men their right.

Use 9. Ninthly, This may teach ministers to be as doors to open a wide entrance for the people to come to Christ; not as those scribes and pharisees which Christ complains of, Luke 12:52, which

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neither enter in themselves, nor would suffer others: such are rather portcullises, yea, gates of hell.

Use 10. Tenthly, This may let us see the duty of magistrates. If ministers be doors, it should be their care to hem them in with boards of cedar, to provide for their security; it is the duty of every magistrate and member to hem them in, that no enemy may be able to oppose them, but that they may be without fear among them; as it is, 1 Corinthians 16:10, 'see that Timothy be without fear among you'.

Use 11. Eleventhly, This may let us see, a church enjoying a faithful ministry and a Christian magistracy, enjoyeth a special favour from Christ.

Use 12. Twelfthly, This lets us see what great care Christ will one day have of his church, though lions, dragons, and bears have broken in upon the church to devour it; and besides, many foxes have sought to subvert it, and to cut the sinews of it asunder, yet when Christ shall take the government of it into his hands, there shall be no enemy to offer violence to it; when the great leviathan shall be punished, even leviathan that crooked serpent, and the dragon that is in the sea shall be slain: 'In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of new wine,' Isaiah 27:1,2; yea, the Lord will keep it, he will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, he

will keep it night and day; yea, Christ will one day free his church from all oppression, and give free passage to all his ordinances.

Use 13. Finally, This serves to teach us all what affection we should have to the coming of Christ to judgment; to desire him to be as the 'roe or a young hart upon the mountain of spices'; to take us up into the highest heavens, where are all manner of sweet and fragrant and pleasant things, even fullness of joy for evermore, Psalm 16:11; 2 Timothy 4:8.

The faithful spouses of Christ do earnestly desire his coming to judgment, but harlots would put off his coming. A chaste wife and a loyal spouse

desires her husband to send no more letters, but to hasten his return, and come home; but a harlot would have her husband's coming deferred; so they whose hearts are a-whoring after the world, neither desire Christ's coming, nor love his appearing. That we may therefore show and approve ourselves to be the true spouses of Christ, desire his hasty coming, and say, as Revelation 22:20, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.' The Lord work this good work and frame of grace in our hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen. 'Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!' Numbers 24:23.