

ECCLESIAST TO THE READER

EDITION OF THE GREEK TEXT

The NETS translation is based on the edition of Alfred Rahlfs (*Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, 2 vols. [Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935]), since at present no fully critical text is available, though one is in progress.

In one case I have deviated from Rahlfs' edition. In 1.17 Rahlfs has παραβολάς ("comparisons," "analogies," or "parables"), a reading supported by all Greek manuscripts (La = *errores* = α' , cf. Vulg.). This is contrary, however, to the translation technique of the Greek translator. The Hebrew word being translated in 1.17 is הוֹלָלוּת ("madness"). This is rendered by περιφορά in 2.12 and 7.25 and also by περιφέρεια, a cognate noun, in 9.3. Similarly, הוֹלָלוּת ("madness") is rendered by περιφέρεια in 10.13 and מְהוֹלָלוּ ("mad") by περιφορά in 2.2. Conversely, the Greek translator uses παραβολή for the only occurrence of מִשַׁל ("comparison," "proverb") in 12.9. Therefore, the original text at 1.17 was probably περιφοράς for which παραβολάς represents an error of hearing and sight occurring so early that it dominated the textual tradition that has come down to us. Earlier proposals are περιφοράν (Grabe) and παραφοράς (R. Gordis, "Ecclesiastes 1.17—Its Text and Interpretation," *JBL* 56 (1937) 323–330 = 8' 248^{mg}).

TITLE OF THE BOOK

The title for this book in NETS requires some explanation. In the English versions it is called "Ecclesiastes," a title adopted from the Latin Vulgate and derived originally from the Greek Ἐκκλησιάζστης. The title in Hebrew reads "The Words of Qoheleth, the son of David, king in Jerusalem," or just "Qoheleth" (Eccl 1.1). "Qoheleth" occurs only seven times in the book and nowhere else in the canonical Hebrew writings. It may be construed as a feminine singular active participle of the verb קָהַל, which has the basic meaning of "assembling." Analogous forms are found in the list of the "Servants of Solomon" in Ezra and Nehemiah to designate public officials. For example, "Hassophereth" in Ezra 2.55 and Nehemiah 7.57 may mean "Official Scribe," and "Pokereth-Hazzebaim" in Ezra 2.55 and Nehemiah 7.59 may mean "Gazelle-Warden." If this analysis is correct, Qoheleth could perhaps designate the "Officer of the Qahal" or "Master of Ceremonies of the Assembly," a role similar to the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Greek translator related this term to the noun ἐκκλησία, "assembly" and translated rather than transliterated the word by an agent noun in Greek which means "one who participates in a popular assembly." Jerome interpreted this in Latin by the use of the term *concinator*, or "speaker before an assembly," a meaning unattested in Greek prior to the Greek translation. It was from this meaning that the English concept of "Preacher" was derived. The English equivalent used here is Ecclesiast. Since the term is known in English, it is spelled here accordingly, though its intended meaning is "member of an assembly."

TRANSLATION PROFILE OF THE GREEK

The Greek translation of Ecclesiast is characterised by extreme formal equivalence, so much so that scholars have suggested that it is the work of Aquila himself, a revisor of the Septuagint who flourished c. 120 CE.¹ While the identity of the translator is still uncertain and undetermined according to the most recent research, the character of the translation reveals that in fact some patterns are identical to those considered classical Aquila, while others are clearly not Aquila.

The approach of the translator to his task is one where faithfulness is defined and measured by the degree of quantitative alignment between Greek translation and Hebrew original. As a result, the text is dif-

¹ This is not an appropriate forum to debate whether or not Ecclesiast represents the work of Aquila either as an early edition or an edition in final form, and in any case the most recent research suggests the verdict is *non liquet*. See John Jarick, "Aquila's *Koheleth*," *Textus* 15 (1990) 131–139 and bibliography in his footnotes for earlier contributions to the debate.

ficult to read in places and almost incomprehensible at times from the point of view of the native speaker of Hellenistic Greek who had no knowledge of or recourse to the source text. The attempt of the translator to align his translation with the source language and text affects both lexical and syntactic choices in Greek. Choosing the same lexeme in Greek for every occurrence of a particular lexeme in the Hebrew regardless of the contextual meaning results in a high degree of stereotyping. Few calques or isolate renderings, however, are to be found. Like Aquila, then, consistency and uniformity in Hebrew-Greek equivalents is extremely rigid. Unlike Aquila, however, we do not see a set of Hebrew-Greek equivalents that is so highly refined and specialized that distinct equivalents are employed for each Hebrew lexeme, nor does the translator attempt to represent the root system of Hebrew by forming a set of equivalents from a single Greek stem to be used for nouns and verbs derived from a single root. Even more than in lexical equivalents, it is in the morpho-syntactic structures that the attempt to align the Greek and the Hebrew is most apparent and also where the results are so awkward or even absurd. One obvious and outstanding example is the rendering of אָהַב by οὖν (1.14; 2.12, 17, 18; 3.10, 11*bis*, 17*bis*; 4.1, 2, 3, 4*bis*, 15; 5.3, 6; 7.14, 15, 18, 26, 29; 8.8, 9, 15, 17*bis*; 9.1*bis*, 15; 10.19, 20; 11.5, 7; 12.9, 14).² That οὖν is found with the dative in 9.11 is normal (οὖν πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς); that it is found, however, with the genitive (9.15) or accusative (rel.) to mark the direct object is contrary to Greek grammar. This characteristic may be further illustrated. In 2.1 בָּטוּר וְרֵאָה is rendered by καὶ ἰδὲ ἐν ἀγαθῷ. The verb רֵאָה followed by בָּ here is idiomatic, conveying the sense “to enjoy” (so NRSV). The Greek translator rigidly renders רֵאָה by εἶδον and בָּ by ἐν. Contextually, “to see in good” makes no sense in Greek. Again, a construction article + πᾶς + noun normally contrasts the whole with the part.³ Yet in 3.17 כִּי־עַתָּה לְכָל הַפֶּיץ is rendered ὅτι καιρὸς τῷ παντὶ πράγματι (cf. 3.1; 4.8, 16). The article τῷ is employed to represent the ל; this effect creates difficulties for the Greek reader and skews the meaning of the Hebrew while attempting to represent it formally in all respects. Other cases are perhaps readable, but awkwardly so. Note, for example, that עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִבְאוּ יְמֵי הָרֵעָה in 12.1 is rendered by ἕως ὅτου μὴ ἔλθωσιν ἡμέραι τῆς κακίας. With the negative μὴ, the result is awkward but not necessarily impossible Greek. Elsewhere the rigid approach of the translator is carried off more cleverly. Hebrew אָהַב (1.17; 2.1, 7, 8, 14, 15*bis*, 19, 21, 23, 23, 24, 26; 3.11; 4.4, 8*tris*, 11, 14, 16*bis*, 16; 5.9, 16, 18; 6.5, 9; 7.14, 21, 22*bis*; 8.10, 12, 14, 16; 9.1*bis*, 6*bis*, 12, 13; 10.20; 12.5) or אָהַב is (1.11; 3.13; 5.15; 6.3, 7; 7.6, 18; 8.17; 9.3, 11*tris*; 10.3; 11.2) is always rendered by καίγῃ except in a double translation in 7.22*b* where the equivalent is simply καί. Nonetheless, the equivalence אָהַב/אָהַב = καίγῃ, while illustrating the spirit of the Greek translator, is unlikely to have originated with him. Here the translator extends and perpetuates a tradition. Clearly, then, the Greek translator of Ecclesiast belongs to the so-called καίγῃ tradition of translators.

THE NETS TRANSLATION

An attempt has been made to capture and represent in the NETS translation something of the approach, characteristics, and spirit of the Greek translation. Naturally, English that is ungrammatical is avoided. Formal equivalence, however, is frequently given higher priority than idiomatic English.

In some cases, formal equivalence in the Greek vis-à-vis the Hebrew is possible or has been reproduced where the English would be ungrammatical. The representation of אָהַב by οὖν, for example, must be ignored in NETS. Another example is the frequent use of the independent pronoun אֲנִי in the Hebrew where the verb is already marked for first person, carefully reproduced by ἐγώ in the Greek translation (1.12, 6*bis*; 2.1, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15*tris*, 18*bis*, 20, 24; 3.17, 18; 4.1, 2, 4, 7, 8; 5.17; 7.25, 26; 8.12, 15; 9.16). This has only been represented in NETS in 1.12. In cases like 2.1, discussed earlier, no attempt is made to represent rigidly the preposition in Greek with its formal equivalent in the English language, even though that is what the Greek translator has done in order to represent the Hebrew exactly.

The attempt to follow a model of translation similar to that of the Greek translator has occasionally created clashes with the NRSV. For example, in 5.9 NRSV has a dynamic and idiomatic rendering of the Hebrew: “But all things considered, this is an advantage for a land: a king for a plowed field.” The Greek renders the same Hebrew in extreme literalism. The differences between NETS and NRSV are due partly to the fact that the Greek translation interprets the Hebrew differently but are also due partly to the fact that the literalism is reproduced in NETS.

Aligning NETS with NRSV has been difficult not only where NRSV is more dynamic than the Greek in rendering the same text. On occasion the gender inclusive language policy of NRSV must be abandoned

² 2.12 and 9.11 are included against Ra; see J. Ziegler, “Die Wiedergabe der nota accusativi ‘et, ‘aet- mit su/n,” ZAW 100 Sup (1988) 222–233. This, of course, does not affect the NETS translation.

³ F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (9th–10th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) § 275.7.

in order to represent the Greek faithfully. For example, according to the approach of the Greek translator, all 49 instances of אָנֹכִי are rendered by ἄνθρωπος and all 10 instances of אָנֹכִי are rendered by ἄνθρωπος. This translation technique enables the Greek reader to track the differences between אָנֹכִי and אָנֹכִי in the parent text. In NETS, while gender inclusive renderings may be maintained for ἄνθρωπος, ἄνθρωπος must be rendered by “man” in English, even when אָנֹכִי functions as an indefinite pronoun, in order to represent properly the work of the Greek translator. There are also instances where gender inclusive language has been achieved by converting generic masculine singular pronouns and verbs to common gender plural pronouns and verbs or by altering active constructions to passive. Sometimes this practice so alters the formal equivalence between NRSV and the Hebrew that the formal equivalence between the Greek and the Hebrew cannot be fairly represented this way. Ecclesiast 4.14 and 8.12 may illustrate the attempt in NETS to represent the exact way in which the Greek reproduces the Hebrew text.

EDITORIAL POLICY

While the Greek translator does not always read the beginning and ending of sentences or connections between clauses in the Hebrew in the same way as NRSV, in essence the same versification is used. Differences can be indicated by different grammar and punctuation.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

NETS is for the most part a fresh translation of the Greek adapted to NRSV. Occasionally, the translation of Brenton was consulted and found to be useful.

PETER J. GENTRY

1 The words of the Ecclesiast^a, son of Daud, king of Israel in Ierousalem.
2 Vanity of vanities, said the Ecclesiast,
 Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity.
3 What surplus exists for people
 in all their toil at which they toil under
 the sun?
4 A generation goes, and a generation comes,
 and the earth stands forever.
5 The sun rises, and the sun goes down
 and draws along to its place.
6 When it rises there, it goes to the south
 and circles to the north.
 It circles, going in circles—so^b proceeds the
 spirit^c,
 and on its circuits the spirit^c returns.
7 All the wadis go to the sea,
 and the sea will not be full;
 to the place where the wadis go,
 there they turn back to go.
8 All words are ^dworn out^d;
 a man will not be able to speak;
 the eye will not be satisfied with seeing,
 and the ear will not be filled with hearing.
9 What is that which has happened? It is that
 which will happen!
 And what is that which has been done? It
 is that which will be done.
 And there is nothing novel under the sun.
10 As for the person who will speak and say,
 “See, this is new!”—
 it has already happened in the ages

that have been before us.
11 There is no remembrance of earlier people,
 indeed, of those born later—
 there will not be a remembrance of them
 with those who will be born at the last.
12 I, the Ecclesiast, was king over Israel in Ie-
 rousalem. ¹³And I applied my heart to seek out
 and to examine by wisdom concerning all things
 that happen under heaven, for an unhappy preoc-
 cupation^e God has given to human beings with
 which to be preoccupied. ¹⁴I saw all the deeds that
 have been done under the sun, and see, all are vanity
 and preference of spirit.
15 Something crooked will not be able to be
 set in order,
 and what is lacking will not be able to be
 counted.
16 I spoke in my heart by saying, “As for me,
 see, I have become great and have added wisdom
 to all who were before me in Ierousalem, and my
 heart saw many things regarding wisdom and
 knowledge.” ¹⁷And I applied my heart to know
 wisdom and knowledge; derangements and under-
 standing I understood, that, indeed, this is prefer-
 ence of spirit.
18 For in a great quantity of wisdom is a great
 quantity of knowledge,
 and those who increase knowledge will
 increase suffering.

2 I said in my heart, “Come now; let me test you
 with enjoyment; see in good!” And see, in-

^aI.e. a member of an Assembly ^bLacking in Gk ^cOr wind ^dPossibly overworked ^eOr distraction

deed, this was vanity. ²Of laughter I said, "Madness," and of enjoyment, "Why are you doing this?"

³I looked about in my heart whether to draw my flesh into wine—and my heart guided in wisdom—and whether to lay hold on folly until I might see what kind of thing is good for human beings to do under the sun, the number of the days of their life. ⁴I made my work great; I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself. ⁵I made myself gardens and parks, and I planted in them every fruit tree. ⁶I made myself pools of water to water from them a grove sprouting trees. ⁷I acquired male and female slaves, and I had homebred; indeed, I had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem. ⁸I gathered for myself, indeed, silver and gold and valued possessions of kings and of the territories; I got male singers and female singers and the delights of human beings, a cupbearer and pitchers^a.

⁹And I became great and increased more than all who were before me in Jerusalem; indeed, my wisdom stood firm for me. ¹⁰Anything for which my eyes begged, I did not take away from them; I did not hinder my heart from any enjoyment, because my heart rejoiced in all my toil and this was my portion from all my toil. ¹¹And I looked at all my works that my hands had done and at the toil wherein I toiled to do it^b and see, all were vanity and preference of spirit, and there is no surplus under the sun.

¹²And I looked to see wisdom and madness and folly, for who is the person who will come to follow the plan^c in as many things as he made it. ¹³And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.

¹⁴As for the wise, their eyes are in their head, and the fool goes in darkness,

And I know, indeed I, that one eventuality will befall them all. ¹⁵And I said in my heart, "As it befalls the fool, indeed, it will befall me, and why have I become wise?" I then spoke excessively in my heart, because a fool will speak from excess, that, indeed, this is vanity. ¹⁶For there is no remembrance ever of the wise with the fool, inasmuch as already the coming days, even all things, are forgotten, and how will the wise die with the fool? ¹⁷And I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all things are vanity and preference of spirit.

¹⁸I hated all my toil in which I am toiling under the sun, because I am leaving it to the person being born after me ¹⁹—and who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? And he will have authority over all my toil at which I toiled and became wise under the sun; indeed, this is vanity. ²⁰And I turned to bid farewell with my heart to all the toil at which I toiled under the sun. ²¹For there is a person whose toil is with wisdom and knowledge and manliness, and a person who did not toil at it: he will give him his portion; indeed, this is vanity and a great evil. ²²For what happens^d to

mortals in all their toil and in the preference of their heart with which they toil under the sun? ²³For all their days are days^b of pains, and their preoccupation is of anger; indeed, at night their heart does not sleep. Indeed, this is vanity.

²⁴It is not good in humans^e what they will eat and what they will drink and what they will show to their soul as good in their toil. Indeed, this, I saw, is from the hand of God. ²⁵For who will eat and who will refrain from eating^b apart from him? ²⁶For to the one who is good before him he gave wisdom and knowledge and enjoyment, and to the sinner he gave a preoccupation to add and to gather, to give to the one who is good before God, because, indeed, this is vanity and preference of spirit.

3 For everything there is a time, and a right time for every matter under heaven:

- ² a right time to give birth, and a right time to die;
- a right time to plant, and a right time to pluck up what is planted;
- ³ a right time to kill, and a right time to heal; a right time to tear down, and a right time to build;
- ⁴ a right time to weep, and a right time to laugh; a right time to mourn, and a right time to dance;
- ⁵ a right time to throw stones, and a right time to gather stones; a right time to embrace, and a right time to be far from embracing;
- ⁶ a right time to seek, and a right time to lose; a right time to keep, and a right time to throw away;
- ⁷ a right time to tear, and a right time to sew; a right time to keep silence, and a right time to speak;
- ⁸ a right time to love, and a right time to hate; a right time for war, and a right time for peace.

⁹What surplus has the maker in what he toils? ¹⁰I saw all the preoccupation which God has given to humans to be preoccupied with. ¹¹He made everything fine in its right time; indeed, he granted eternity in their heart so that they should not find the work that God has done from the beginning even to the end. ¹²I know that there is ^fno good in them^f except to be glad and to do good in their life. ¹³Indeed, everyone who will eat and drink and should see good in their toil—it is a divine gift. ¹⁴I know that everything that God has done—it will be forever; to it there is nothing to add, and from it there is nothing to take away; God has done this so that all should stand in awe before him. ¹⁵That which happened, already is, and what is to happen, already took place, and God will seek out the one being pursued.

¹⁶Moreover, I saw under the sun the place of justice—the impious was there, and the place of

^aPossibly female cupbearers ^bLacking in Gk ^cOr counsel humans than ^dPerhaps nothing better for them

^dPerhaps belongs ^ePerhaps There is nothing better in

the righteous—the impious was there. ¹⁷I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the impious, for there is a right time for every matter and for every work. ¹⁸There I said in my heart concerning the speech of human beings, that God will discern them, indeed, to show even to them that they are cattle. ¹⁹For what befalls humans and what befalls cattle—one eventuality is for them; as the death of the one, so is the death of the other. They all have one spirit^a, and in what way did humans excel above cattle? Nothing, because all things are vanity. ²⁰All things go to one place; all things came from the dust, and all things return to the dust. ²¹And who knows the spirit of humans, whether it ascends upward, and the spirit of cattle, whether it descends downward to the earth? ²²And I saw that there is ^bno good^b except that people will enjoy themselves in their works, because that is their portion, for who will bring them to see whatever happens after them?

4 And I turned, and I saw all the extortions that take place under the sun. Look, the tear of the oppressed—and there is no one to comfort them! From the hand of those oppressing them is strength—and there is no one to comfort them. ²And I praised the dead, who have already died, more than the living who are living until now. ³And better than both is whoever has not yet been, who has not seen the grievous work that is done under the sun.

4 And I saw all toil and all manliness of work, that it is a man's envy of his companion. Indeed, this is vanity and preference of spirit.

⁵ Fools folded their hands
and consumed their own flesh.

⁶ Better is a handful of repose
than two handfuls of toil,
and preference of spirit.

7 And I turned and saw vanity under the sun: ⁸there is one, and there is no second; indeed, he has neither son nor brother, and there is no end to all his toil; indeed, his eye is not satisfied with riches. "For whom do I toil and deprive my life from goodness?" Even this is vanity and an unhappy preoccupation.

9 Better are two than one, because they have a good reward in their toil. ¹⁰For if they fall, the one will raise his partner up, and woe to the one, when he falls, and there should be no second to raise him up. ¹¹Indeed, if two sleep, they also have warmth, and the one, how should he be warmed? ¹²Even if the one should prevail, two will stand against him. A threefold cord will not be quickly broken.

13 Better a child poor and wise than a king old and foolish, who did not know to give heed any longer; ¹⁴for from the house of prisoners he^c will come out to reign, for, indeed, in his kingdom he was born poor. ¹⁵I saw all the living, who were walking about under the sun, with the second youth, who will stand in his^d place. ¹⁶There is no

end to all the people, to all who were born before them; indeed, those who came later will not rejoice in him, for, indeed, this is vanity and preference of spirit. ¹⁷(^{5.1})Guard your foot, whenever you go to the house of God and are near to hear. Above a gift of fools is your sacrifice, for they do not know how to do evil.

5 ⁽²⁾Never be in a hurry with your mouth, nor let your heart be quick to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.

²(³) For a dream comes with a great amount of distraction^e, and a fool's voice with a great quantity of words.

³(⁴) Whenever you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it, for there is no will in fools. Whatever you vow, pay up. ⁴(⁵)It is better that you do not vow than that you vow and do not pay up. ⁵(⁶)Do not allow your mouth to lead your flesh into sin, and do not say before God, "It is ignorance," in order that God should not be angry at your utterance and destroy the works of your hands.

⁶(⁷) For with a great quantity of dreams are both vanities and many words; so fear God!

⁷(⁸) If you see in a territory the extortion of the poor and the snatching away of justice and right, do not be amazed at the matter, for there is a high one to watch over a high one and higher ones over them. ⁸(⁹)And the surplus of the land in everything is a king over the worked field.

⁹(¹⁰) One who loves money will not be satisfied with money. And who loved produce in a great quantity of them? Indeed, this is vanity.

¹⁰(¹¹) With an abundance of goodness, eaters of it were increased. And what is manliness to him who has it, except to see with his eyes?

¹¹(¹²) Sweet is the sleep of a slave, whether he eats little or much, and for the person filled full with being rich, there is no sending him away to sleep.

¹²(¹³) There is an illness that I saw under the sun: riches being kept by him who has them to his misfortune. ¹³(¹⁴)And those riches will be lost in an unhappy preoccupation, and he begot a child, and there is nothing in his hand. ¹⁴(¹⁵)Just as he came out from his mother's womb naked, he will return to go as he came, and he will not take anything for his toil that may go in his hand. ¹⁵(¹⁶)Indeed, this is a grievous ill: for as he arrived, so also he will go away, and what is his surplus, at which he toils for wind? ¹⁶(¹⁷)Indeed, all his days are in darkness and mourning, and with much anger and sickness and bitterness^f.

¹⁷(¹⁸) See what I saw as good, what is fine: to eat and to drink and to see goodness in all his toil at whatever he toils under the sun, the number of the days of his life which God gave to him, for this is his portion. ¹⁸(¹⁹)Indeed, all to whom God has given to them wealth and possessions and they have authority over them to eat from it and to take

^aPossibly *breath* ^bPerhaps *nothing better* ^c*i.e. the child* ^d*i.e. the king's* ^eOr *preoccupation* ^fOr *resentment*

their portion and to enjoy themselves in their toil—this is a divine gift. ¹⁹⁽²⁰⁾For not in many respects will they remember the days of their lives, because God keeps them preoccupied with the merriment of their hearts.

6 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it is great upon humankind: ²there is a man to whom God will give to him wealth and possessions and honor, and he is not lacking with respect to his soul from all things that he desires, and God does not give authority to him to eat from it, because a stranger will eat it. This is vanity and a grievous illness. ³If a man begets a hundred children and will live many years and a great number is what will be the days of his years and his soul will not be satisfied with goodness, indeed, he has no burial; I said: A miscarriage^a is better than he. ⁴For it came in vanity, and it goes in darkness, and in darkness its name will be covered; ⁵indeed, it did not see the sun and did not know; this one has more rest than he. ⁶Even if he lived recurrences of a thousand years and he did not see goodness—do not all things go to one place?

⁷ All toil of humankind is for their mouth; indeed, their soul will not be satisfied. ⁸For what surplus has the wise over the fool, since the needy knows to walk before life? ⁹Better is the sight of the eyes than going on spirit^b; indeed, this is vanity and preference of spirit.

¹⁰ If anything has happened, it has already been named, and it is known what human beings are, and they will not be able to dispute with those stronger than they. ¹¹For many words are multiplying vanity; what surplus has one? ¹²For who knows what is good for mortals in their life, the number of the days of their life of vanity, and they passed them in shadow? For who will tell them what will be after them under the sun?

7 A good name is better than good anointing-oil, and the day of death is better than the day of one's birth.

² It is better to go to a house of mourning than that to go to a house of drinking, because this is the end of everyone, and the living will give it to his heart.

³ Better is anger than laughter, for by a bad countenance the heart will be made good.

⁴ The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, and the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

⁵ It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than a man hearing the song of fools.

⁶ For as the sound of thorns under a cauldron, so is the laughter of fools; indeed, this is vanity.

⁷ For extortion turns a wise person mad,

and it will destroy his heart of courage.

⁸ Better is the end of words than its beginning; better is a patient person than one proud in spirit.

⁹ Do not be hasty in your spirit to become angry, for anger will rest^c in the bosom of fools.

¹⁰ Do not say, "Why did it happen that the former days were better than these?" For it is not with wisdom you have asked concerning this.

¹¹ Wisdom is good with distribution of land^d, and a surplus to those who see the sun.

¹² For wisdom, in its shade, is like the shade of money, and a surplus of knowledge of wisdom will give life to the one who has it.

¹³ Consider the works of God; who will be able to set in order whomever God has made crooked?

¹⁴ In a day of prosperity live in prosperity, and in a day of misfortune, consider; indeed, the one in proportion to the other God has made concerning speech so that mortals may not find anything after them.

¹⁵ I saw all things in my days of vanity; there are righteous people perishing in their righteousness, and there are impious people remaining in their wickedness. ¹⁶Do not be very righteous, and do not be excessively wise, lest you be horrified. ¹⁷Do not be very ungodly, and do not become hard so that you should not die when it is not your time. ¹⁸It is good that you hold on to the one; indeed, do not let your hand go from the other, for the one who fears God will go forth in all things.

¹⁹ Wisdom will give help to the wise more than ten having authority over those who are in the city.

²⁰ For as to humanity, there is not a just person in the earth who will do good and will not sin.

²¹ Indeed, to all the words that people will speak do not give your heart so that you do not hear your slave cursing you, ²²for frequently he will do you evil and many times he will bring hurt to your heart as, indeed, you have cursed others.

²³ All these things I tested by wisdom; I said, "I will become wise," ²⁴and it was far from me, far beyond what was, and a deep depth, who will find it? ²⁵I—in fact my heart—went full circle to know and to examine and seek wisdom and a reckoning and to know the folly of the impious and hardness and madness. ²⁶And I find more bitter than death the woman who is hunted prey, and her heart is hunting-nets; her hands are fetters; one who is good before God will be delivered from her, and one sinning will be taken by her. ²⁷See, this I found, said the Ecclesiast, adding one to one to find the calculation ²⁸which my soul still sought but did not find. One man from a thousand I found, and a woman among all these I did not find. ²⁹Albeit, see, this I found what God made:

^aOr premature stillbirth ^bI.e. courage ^cOr settle ^dPossibly inheritance

man upright. And they themselves have searched out many schemes^a.

8 Who knows the wise?
And who knows the interpretation^b of
what is said?

A person's wisdom will illuminate his face,
and one without shame in his face will
be hated.

2 Keep a king's utterance, and do not be hasty about the expression of a sacred oath. ³From his presence you will go; do not stand still because of painful words, for all that he wants he will do. ⁴Just as a king will speak having authority, and who will say to him, "What will you do?" ⁵Whoever keeps a command will not know anything harmful, and the heart of the wise knows the right time of decision. ⁶For to every matter there is a right time and decision, for the knowledge of mortals is great upon them. ⁷For they do not know what is going to be, for who will tell them just how it will be? ⁸There is no one having authority over the spirit to restrain the spirit, and there is no authority over the day of death; there is no discharge from the battle, and impiety will not deliver those at home with it. ⁹All this I observed, and I gave my heart to every work that is done under the sun—things that one person exercised authority over another to hurt them.

10 Then I saw the impious carried into tombs; they went from the holy place, and they were praised in the city that they did so. Indeed, this is vanity. ¹¹Because a refutation of those doing evil there does not happen quickly—on account of this the heart of humans was fully convinced in them to do evil. ¹²He who sinned did what was evil from then and from ^ca length to it; for, indeed, I know that it will be well with those who fear God so that they should fear before him, ¹³and it will not be well for the impious, and they will not prolong days in shadow who do not stand in fear before God.

14 There is a vanity that is done on earth, that there are righteous people that it overtakes them according to the work of the impious, and there are ungodly that it overtakes them according as the work of the righteous. I said that, indeed, this is vanity.

15 And I praised enjoyment, for there is ^dno good^d for people under the sun except to eat and to drink and to enjoy themselves, and this will be there with them in their toil through the days of their life that God has given to them under the sun.

16 When I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the preoccupation that is done on earth, because, indeed, by day and by night there is no seeing sleep with one's eyes, ¹⁷then I saw all the works of God, that no one will be able to find out the work that is done under the sun; as much as one may toil to search out, he will not find; indeed,

whatever the wise say they know, they will not be able to find it out.

9 For all this I gave to my heart, and my heart saw all this: how the righteous and the wise and their deeds^e are in the hand of God; indeed, love and, indeed, hate there is no person in the know; all things are before them; ²vanity is in all things. One eventuality is for the righteous and the impious, for the good and for the evil, for the clean and for the unclean, for the one who sacrifices and for the one who does not sacrifice. As are the good, so are the sinners; so are those who swear, just as those who fear an oath. ³This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that one eventuality is for all. Indeed, the heart of humans was filled with evil; madness is in their heart while they live, and after them they go to the dead. ⁴For who are they who have a part with all the living? There is hope, because a living dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵For the living will know that they will die, and the dead are not knowing anything; they have no more reward, because their memory is forgotten. ⁶Indeed, their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished, and they have no further portion forever in all that is done under the sun.

7 Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a good heart, for God has already approved your works. ⁸At every time let your garments be white; do let not oil be lacking upon your head. ⁹See life with the wife ^fwhom you loved^f, all the days of your life of vanity that are given to you under the sun—all your days of vanity, because it is your portion in your life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. ¹⁰Whatever your hand finds to do, as is your might, do! For there is no work and reasonings^g and knowledge and wisdom in Hades, where you are going.

11 I turned, and I saw under the sun that the race is not to the nimble, nor the battle to the strong, nor, indeed, bread to the wise, nor, indeed, riches to the intelligent, nor, indeed, favor to those who are perceptive, because time and chance will happen to them all. ¹²For, indeed, no one knows their time. Like fish being taken with a pernicious net and like birds being caught in a snare, like them mortals are snared at a time of ruin, when it suddenly falls upon them.

13 Indeed, this I saw as wisdom under the sun, and it was great according to me. ¹⁴There was a little city and few men in it, and a great king would come against it and surround it and would build ^ha great palisaded camp^h against it, ¹⁵and he would find in it a poor wise man, and he himself will deliver the city by his wisdom. And no one remembered that poor man. ¹⁶And I said, "Better is wisdom than might, and the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not being heard."

¹⁷ The words of the wise in rest are heard
above

^aOr reasonings ^bOr solution ^cPossibly a long time before ^dPerhaps nothing better ^eOr productions ^fPossibly with whom you made love ^gOr thought ^hPerhaps great siege works

ECCLESIAST 9-12

655

- the shouting of those exercising authority
in follies.
- 18 Wisdom is better than instruments of war,
and one sinner will destroy much good.
- 10** Deadly flies will make a preparation of
aromatic oil give off a foul odor;
a little wisdom is of more worth than
honor derived from great folly.
- 2 The heart of the wise is to his right,
and the heart of the fool is to his left.
- 3 Indeed, when a fool walks on the road, his
heart will be lacking,
and all he will consider is foolishness.
- 4 If the spirit of the one holding authority
rises against you,
do not leave your place,
for healing will put a stop to great offenses.
- 5 There is an evil, which I saw under the sun,
like an involuntary offense, which proceeded from
the one in authority: ⁶a fool was allowed in great
heights, and the rich will sit in a low place. ⁷I have
seen slaves upon horses and rulers walking on the
ground like slaves.
- 8 The one digging a hole will fall into it,
and the one who demolishes a wall—a
snake will bite him.
- 9 One who lifts stones will be hurt^a by them;
one who splits trees will be endangered
by them.
- 10 If the iron tool fails^b, he himself has also
troubled his face,
and he will put power into his efforts,
and the extra of being a man is skill.
- 11 If the snake bites when there is no
whispering,
in fact there is no surplus to the charmer.
- 12 The words of the mouth of the wise are
grace,
and the lips of the fool will plunge him
into the sea.
- 13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is
foolishness,
and the last of his speech is wicked
madness,
- 14 and the fool multiplies words.
No one knows what has happened,
and what will be after them who can tell
them?
- 15 The toil of fools will weary them—
one who did not know how to go into
the city.
- 16 Alas for you, O city, whose king is young,
and your rulers eat in the early morning!
- 17 Happy are you, O land, whose king is the
son of freemen,
and your rulers at the proper time will eat
^din strength^d,
and they will not be ashamed.
- 18 Through hesitations the roofing will be
debased^e,
and in idleness of hands the house will
drip.
- 19 They make bread for laughter;
wine gladdens the living
and will obey money in all respects.
- 20 Indeed, in your consciousness do not curse
the king,
and in your bedrooms do not curse the
rich,
for a bird of the sky will carry off your
voice,
and one having wings will bring back
word.
- 11** Send out your bread upon the face of the
water,
for in a great number of days you will
find it.
- 2 Give a portion to seven, indeed, to eight,
for you do not know what bad condition
will be upon the earth.
- 3 If the clouds are full of rain,
upon the earth they will pour out;
whether a tree falls to the south or to the
north,
in the place where the tree will fall, there
it will be.
- 4 One who watches the wind will not
sow,
and one who looks at the clouds will not
reap.
- 5 When one does not know what the way of the
spirit is, like bones in the belly of the pregnant
woman, so you will not know the works of God,
whatever he will do.
- 6 In the morning, sow your seed, and to the
evening do not let your hand be slack, for you do
not know what sort will fit, whether this or that
and whether the two are good together.
- 7 Light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to
see the sun.
- 8 For even if a person will live many years, in
them all he will be merry, and he will remember
the days of darkness, because^f they will be many.
All that is coming is vanity.
- 9 Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let
your heart do you good in the days of your youth.
Walk in the ways of your heart and by the sight of
your eyes, and know that for all these things God
will bring you into judgment.
- 10 Put away anger from your heart, and divert
pains^g from your body, for youth and lack of under-
standing are vanity.
- 12** Remember your creator in the days of your
youth, before the days of trouble come
and the years arrive in which you will say, "I have
no wish for them." ²Before the sun and the light
and the moon and the stars are darkened and the

^aPossibly worn out ^bOr becomes dilapidated ^ci.e. by a snake-charmer ^dPossibly with gusto ^ePossibly deteriorated
^fOr that ^gOr evil

clouds return after the rain; ³in the day when the guards of the house shake and the strong men are twisted, and the women who grind ceased working, because they are few, and those who look through the windows will be dimmed, ⁴and they will lock the doors in the market, because of the weakness of the sound of the woman who grinds, and one will rise up at the sound of the sparrow, and all the daughters of song will be brought low. ⁵Indeed, they will see from heights, and terrors will be in the road; when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper becomes fat, and the caperberry is scattered, because mortals went to their eternal home, and the mourners circled in the market; ⁶before the cord of silver^a is ruined and the blossom of gold is crushed and the pitcher is broken at the fountain and the wheel at the cistern races together ⁷and the dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to the God

who gave it. ⁸Vanity of vanities, said the Ecclesiast; all is vanity.

⁹Beyond the fact that the Ecclesiast was wise, he also taught the people knowledge, and an ear will track out an arrangement of parables. ¹⁰The Ecclesiast sought many ways to find the words he wanted, even something written of straightforwardness, words of truth.

¹¹The words of the wise are like ox-goads and like nails firmly planted; those from the collections were given from one ^bshepherd and a surplus of them. ¹²My son^b, beware of making many books; there is no end, and much study is a wearying of the flesh.

¹³The end of the message; all is heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is every person. ¹⁴For God will bring every work in judgment, in everything overlooked, whether good or whether evil.

^aOr *money* ^bPossibly *shepherd. And beyond them, my son*

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press, Inc. publishes works that further Oxford University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education.

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016
www.oup.com

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press.

A New English Translation of the Septuagint, ©2007 by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

The text of *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS) may be quoted in any form (written, visual, electronic, or audio) up to and inclusive of 250 verses without written permission from Oxford University Press, provided that the verses quoted do not account for more than 20% of the work in which they are quoted and provided that a complete book of NETS is not quoted. When NETS is quoted in this way, one of the following credit lines must appear on the copyright page of the work:

Quotations marked NETS are taken from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ©2007 by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc. Used by permission of Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

Quotations are taken from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ©2007 by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc. Used by permission of Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, quotations are taken from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ©2007 by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc. Used by permission of Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

A New English Translation of the Septuagint may be quoted in nonsalable media (such as church bulletins, orders of service, liturgies, newsletters, etc.) without inclusion of a complete copyright notice, but the abbreviation NETS must appear at the end of each quotation.

All other uses of NETS (including but not limited to the following: quotation in excess of 250 verses or 20% of the work, publication of any commentary or reference work that uses NETS) require written permission from Oxford University Press.

The title *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, the abbreviation NETS, and the NETS logo are trademarks of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc. and may not be used without written permission from Oxford University Press.

New Revised Standard Version Bible, ©1989 by Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Interior design and typesetting by Blue Heron Bookcraft, Battle Ground, WA.

Printed in the United States
1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2