

these Judæan disciples do not come into prominence. Was there a reason in some family connexion why the evangelist did not openly cast in his lot with the primitive community, and hold a conspicuous position in it? Did he hope by avoiding an open breach with the priesthood to continue the exercise of his influence on behalf of the disciples as we have conjectured he did on behalf of the Master? Can xii. 42-43 contain a personal confession? Such questions are worth pondering.

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LITERARY ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BOOK OF  
ECCLESIASTICUS.

xxxvii. 25. *The days of the life of a man may be numbered : but the days of Israel are innumerable.*

Compare the application of this by Matthew Arnold, in his preface to *Culture and Anarchy*, where, speaking of the Hebraising Philistines in British life, he remarks :—

Ousted they will not be, but transformed. Ousted they do not deserve to be, and will not be. For *the days of Israel are innumerable* ; and in its blame of Hebraising too, and in its praise of Hellenising, culture must not fail to keep its flexibility. . . . The habits and discipline received from Hebraism remain for our race an eternal possession ; and, as humanity is constituted, one must never assign to them the second rank to-day, without being prepared to restore to them the first rank to-morrow.

xxxviii. 17, 20-21. *Make bitter weeping and make passionate wailing, and let thy mourning be according to his desert, for one day or two, lest thou be evil spoken of : and so be comforted for thy sorrow. Give not thy heart unto sorrow : put it away, remembering the last end. Him thou shalt not profit, and thou wilt hurt thyself.*

When we have received the last breath of our friend [says Jeremy Taylor in *Holy Dying*], and closed his eyes, and composed his body for the grave, then seasonable is the counsel of the son of Sirach :

“ Weep bitterly, and make great moan, and use lamentation, as he is worthy ; and that a day or two, lest thou be evil spoken of ; and then comfort thyself for thy heaviness. But take no grief to heart ; for there is no morning again : thou shalt not do him good, but hurt thyself.” Solemn and appointed mournings are good expressions of our dearness to the departed soul, and of his worth, and our value of him ; and it hath its praise in nature and in manners and in public customs ; but the praise of it is not in the Gospel, that is, it hath no direct and proper uses in religion.

xxxviii. 24. *The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure : and he that hath little business shall be wise.*

In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke quotes this and xxxviii. 25 from a book which, apocryphal or canonical, “ contains,” he is sure, “ a great deal of sense and truth ”—and quotes them to corroborate this argument against artificial equality :—

The Chancellor of France at the opening of the states, said, in a tone of oratorical flourish, that all occupations were honourable. If he meant only, that no honest employment was disgraceful, he would not have gone beyond the truth. But in asserting that anything is honourable, we imply some distinction in its favour. The occupation of a hair-dresser, or of a working tallow-chandler, cannot be a matter of honour to any person—to say nothing of a number of more servile employments. Such descriptions of men ought not to suffer oppression from the state ; but the state suffers oppression, if such as they, either individually or collectively, are permitted to rule.

xxxviii. 25. *How shall he become wise that holdeth the plough, that driveth oxen and is occupied in their labours, and whose discourse is of the stock of bulls ?*

Certain it is [says Boswell] that Johnson paid great attention to Taylor. He now, however, said to me : “ Sir, I love him ; but I do not love him more ; my regard for him does not increase. As it is said in the Apocrypha, his talk is of bullocks.”

The teeming damp that comes up from the plough-furrow [Keats wrote to his friend Taylor] is of great effect in taming the fierceness of a strong man—more than his labour . . . let him leave the plough, and he will think quietly of his supper. Agriculture is the tamer of men, it enervates their nature—this appears a great cause of the imbecility of the Chinese.

xl. 1-5. *Great travail is created for every man, and an heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb, till the day that they return to the mother of all things. Their imagination of things to come, and the day of death, trouble their thoughts, and cause fear of heart; from him that sitteth on a throne of glory, unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes; from him that weareth purple and a crown, unto him that is clothed with a linen frock. Wrath and envy, trouble and unquietness, fear of death, and anger, and strife; and in the time of rest upon his bed his night sleep doth change his knowledge.*

Compare the striking use of this passage in the sixth chapter of *Old Mortality*, where the fanatic Burley, after devotions couched "in strong and emphatic language, rendered more impressive by the Orientalism of Scripture," tries to persuade young Morton to join the Covenanting cause, and fails meantime.

He then mounted his horse, and, turning to Morton, repeated the text of Scripture, "An heavy yoke was ordained for the sons of Adam from the day they go out of their mother's womb, till the day that they return to the mother of all things; from him who is clothed in blue silk and weareth a crown, even to him who weareth simple linen—wrath, envy, trouble, and unquietness, rigour, strife, and fear of death in time of rest." Having uttered these words he set his horse in motion, and soon disappeared among the boughs of the forest.

xl. 11-12. *All things that are of the waters return into the sea. All bribery and injustice shall be blotted out; and good faith shall stand for ever.*

Not ours to give or lose is life;  
Will nature, when her brave ones fall,  
Remake her work? or songs recall  
Death's victim slain in useless strife?

That rivers flow into the sea  
Is loss and waste, the foolish say,  
Nor know that back they find their way,  
Unseen, to where they went to be.

Showers fall upon the hills, springs flow,  
 The river runneth still at hand,  
 Brave men are born into the land,  
 And whence the foolish do not know.—CLOUGH.

xl. 19, 23. *Children and the building of a city establish a man's name ; and a blameless wife is counted above both. . . . A friend and a companion never meet amiss ; and a wife with her husband is above both.*

Note how Sirach, if in accordance with his touch of peculiar harshness he speaks with special virulence of the sins of the bad woman, excels Proverbs in his deepened appreciation of the noble wife. The excellence of the virtuous woman of Proverbs lies, after all, mainly in her industry and diligence. She is above all things the good housewife. Sirach strikes a higher note. It is almost surprising, from the old Jewish point of view, to find him not only putting the companionship of a wife above the companionship of a friend, but also above children. "Friends and companions meet from time to time, but above both is the wife with her husband. Children and the building of a city make a man's name lasting, but a blameless woman is prized above both."—MONTEFIORE : *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 491-2.

xl. 28-29. *My son, lead not a beggar's life ; better it is to die than to beg. A man that looketh unto the table of another, his life is not to be counted for a life.*

Thou shalt have proof how savourest of salt  
 The bread of others, and how hard a road  
 The going up and down another's stairs.

—Dante's *Paradiso* (xvii. : Longfellow's version).

xli. 3. *Fear not the sentence of death ; remember them that have been before thee, and that come after : this is the sentence from the Lord over all flesh.*

'Tis an inevitable chance—the first statute in Magna Charta—an everlasting Act of Parliament—all must die.—BURTON : *Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 215.

xlii. 12-13. *Look not upon everybody in regard of beauty, and sit not in the midst of women ; for from garments cometh a moth, and from a woman a woman's wickedness.*

That thou wert beautiful, and I not blind,  
 Hath been the sin which shuts me from mankind.

[—BYRON, in *The Lament of Tasso*.

xlii. 24. *All things are double one against another, and God hath made nothing imperfect.*

In his preface to Butler's *Analogy*, Bishop Halifax quotes this verse, and adds :—

On this single observation of the son of Sirach, the whole fabric of our prelate's defence of religion, in his *Analogy*, is raised.

In his own sixth sermon, Butler observes that there is a much more exact correspondence between the natural and the moral world than we are apt to take notice of. The inward frame of man does in a peculiar manner answer to the external condition and circumstances of life, in which he is placed. This is a particular instance of that general observation of the son of Sirach : *all things are double one against another, and God hath made nothing imperfect.*

xliii. 26–29. *By his word all things consist. We may speak much, and yet come short : wherefore in sum, he is all. How shall we be able to magnify him ? For he is great above all his works. The Lord is terrible, and very great, and marvellous is his power.*

In the *Spectator* (number 531) Addison remarks that—

Several eminent philosophers have imagined that the soul, in her separate state, may have new faculties springing up in her, which she is not capable of exerting during her present union with the body ; and whether these faculties may not correspond with other attributes in the divine nature, and open to us hereafter new matter of wonder and adoration, we are altogether ignorant. This, as I have said before, we ought to acquiesce in, that the Sovereign Being, the great Author of Nature, has in him all possible perfection, as well in Kind as in Degree ; to speak according to our methods of conceiving. I shall only add under this head, that where we have raised our notion of this Infinite Being as high as it is possible for the mind of man to go, it will fall infinitely short of what He really is. There is no end of His greatness : The most exalted Creature he has made, is only capable of adoring it, none but himself can comprehend it. The advice of the son of Sirach is very just and sublime in this Light. [Then follows a citation of Ecclus. xliii. 26–32.]

xliii. 30. *When ye glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can ; for even yet will he far exceed ; and when ye exalt*

