

## **Preface To The Preacher Of Solomon (1524)**

This book is called in Hebrew Koheleth, that is, “one who speaks publicly in a congregation”; for Kahal means a congregation gathered together, what is called in Greek ekklesia . But this book was certainly not written or set down by King, Solomon with his own hand; but what others heard from his lips was put together in this form by the scholars, as they admit at the end, when they say, “These words of the wise are as spears and nails, fixed by the masters of the congregation and given from one shepherd.” That is to say, certain persons, selected by the kings and the people, were appointed, at that time, to fix and arrange this and other books, handed down by Solomon, so that thus everyone would not have to make books as he pleased; for they lament in the same place that “of making books there is no end,” and forbid others to take up the work.

These men here call themselves “masters of the congregation,” and books had to be accepted and approved by their hands and their office. For the Jewish people had an external government, instituted by God, and such a thing as that could be done surely and rightly. This book, too, is put together by others out of the sayings of Solomon, and the doctrine and sayings of some wise men are added at the end. The Song of Solomon, too, has the appearance of a book composed by others out of things received from the lips of Solomon. Therefore, no order is preserved in these books, but one thing is mixed with another, since they did not hear all of it from him at one time; and this has to be the nature of such books.

Now this book ought really have the title, “Against the Free Will”; for all of it tends to show that all men’s counsels, proposals, and undertakings are vain and fruitless and always have a different end from that which we want and expect. Thus he would teach us to be passive and let God alone do everything, above and against and without our knowledge and counsel. Therefore you must not

understand this book to be abusing God's creatures when it says, "All is vanity and misery"; for God's creatures are all good (Genesis 1:31 and 2 Timothy 4:4), and this book itself says that one shall be happy with one's wife and enjoy life, etc. It teaches, rather, that the proposals and purposes of men for dealing with creatures all go wrong and are all in vain, if one is not satisfied with what is ready to hand, but wants to be master and ruler of things that are yet to come. In that case, everything goes backwards, and a man has had only his trouble for his pains, and things turn out, anyhow, as God wills and purposes, not as man wills and purposes.

To put it briefly, Christ says, in Matthew 6:34, "Be not anxious about the morrow, for the morrow will have its own anxiety; it is enough that every day has its own evil." That saying is a gloss and table of contents for this book. Anxiety for us is God's affair; our anxiety goes wrong anyhow, and is only lost trouble.