



## 2. “Fear God and Keep his Commandments”: The Character of Man and the Judgment of God in the Epilogue of Ecclesiastes

“Teme a Dios y guarda sus mandamientos”: El carácter  
del hombre y el juicio de Dios en el epílogo de Eclesiastés

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### Abstract

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the motif of “fear of God” can be designated as the supreme song and quintessence of biblical piety. This motif that appears seven times in the book (3,14; 5,7; 7,18; 8,12, twice, 13; 12,13), finds in its epilogue its theological synthesis. However, the passage in Ecclesiastes 12,13.14 has been commonly evaluated by book scholars as a later textual addition by a second author or simply the intervention of a wise commentator. In this article the text of Ecclesiastes 12,13-14 will be approached (with special emphasis on verse 13), through an exegetical analysis according to its own textual design within the book, examining its vocabulary both in its two final verses as well as throughout chapter 12. Also will be analyzed the linguistic connections with the rest of the book and how this passage turns out to be an elaborate conclusion of the wise writer. In this study, some intertextual relations with sapiential, poetic, and prophetic literature will be examined, with the purpose of demonstrating how this text offers us a rich theology for the entire Hebrew Bible focused especially on the important relationship between the moral character of the human being, the Decalogue as their fundamental life norm, and the eschatological orientation of the last verses of Ecclesiastes. The Qohelet’s epilogue can be considered a veritable master theological work and the present article will seek to investigate in this passage and its truths for our time.

### Keywords

Character — Fear of God — God’s Law — Final Judgment — Eschatology

### Resumen

En el libro de Eclesiastés se puede designar al motivo “teme a Dios” como la canción suprema y la quintaesencia de la piedad bíblica. Este tema que aparece siete veces en el libro (3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12, dos veces, 13; 12:13) encuentra en el epílogo su síntesis teológica. Sin embargo, el pasaje de Eclesiastés 12:13,14 fue evaluado comúnmente por los eruditos literarios como un agregado textual posterior por un segundo autor o simplemente la

intervención de un comentarista sabio. En este artículo se enfocará el texto de Eclesiastés 12:13-14 (con énfasis especial en el versículo 13) por medio del análisis exegético según su propio diseño textual dentro del libro, examinando su vocabulario tanto en los versículos finales como en todo el capítulo 12. También se analizarán las conexiones lingüísticas con el resto del libro y cómo este pasaje resulta ser una conclusión elaborada del sabio escritor. En este estudio se examinarán algunas relaciones intertextuales con la literatura sapiencial, poética y profética con el propósito de demostrar cómo este texto nos ofrece una teología rica para toda la Biblia hebrea, concentrada especialmente en la importante relación entre el carácter moral del ser humano, el Decálogo como su norma de vida fundamental y la orientación escatológica de los últimos versículos de Eclesiastés. Al epílogo de Qohélet se lo puede considerar una verdadera obra maestra teológica y este artículo procurará investigar este pasaje y sus verdades para nuestro tiempo.

### Palabras claves

Carácter — Temor de Dios — Ley de Dios — Juicio Final — Escatología

## Introducción

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the motif of “fear of God” can be designated as the supreme song and quintessence of biblical piety.<sup>1</sup> This motif that appears seven times in the book (3,14; 5,7; 7,18; 8,12, twice, 13; 12,13) finds in its epilogue its theological synthesis. However, the passage in Ecclesiastes 12,13-14 has been commonly evaluated by book scholars as a later textual addition by a second author or simply the intervention of a wise commentator.<sup>2</sup> We are probably witnesses of one of the most forgotten biblical texts of the Holy Scriptures thanks to the strength of a contemporary hermeneutic tradition. As will be seen below, this passage is of vital importance not only for the book of Qohelet but also for all biblical thinking.

In this article, the text of Ecclesiastes 12,13-14 will be approached (with special emphasis on verse 13), through an exegetical analysis

<sup>1</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 183.

<sup>2</sup> For a complete discussion of the different theories on this passage, Roland Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 23a. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 126-130; and Michael Fox, *A time to tear down and a time to build up: a rereading of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 363-77.

according to its own textual design within the book, examining its vocabulary both in its two final verses as well as throughout chapter 12. Also will be analyzed the linguistic connections with the rest of the book and how this passage turns out to be an elaborate conclusion of the wise writer. In this work, some intertextual relations with sapiential, poetic, and prophetic literature will be examined, with the purpose of demonstrating how this text offers us a rich theology for the entire Hebrew Bible. The Qohelet's epilogue can be considered a veritable master theological work and the present article will seek to investigate in this passage and its truths for our time.

### Literary Structure and Eschatology in Qohelet

The epilogue of the book of Ecclesiastes is united literary and theologically with the rest of the work.<sup>3</sup> Mentioning its author in the third person at the beginning and at the end (*inclusio*), the architecture of the book of Ecclesiastes would be composed of seven units arranged symmetrically:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> C. S. Seow acknowledges that the themes of Ecclesiastes 12,13, 14 are not in contradiction with the rest of the book, *Ecclesiastes* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 395; In a similar line, Thomas Kruger, *Qoheleth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 213.

<sup>4</sup> David Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament. A Commentary on Genesis – Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 193. For a more detailed structure by the same author, see p. 198. Dorsey notes that these seven units alternate with brief poetic units and extensive autobiographical discussions in a pattern a-b-a-b-a-b-a. Compare with the recent discussion of John F. Hobbins, "The poetry of Qohelet", in *The Words of the Wise are like Goats. Engaging Qoheleth in the 21st Century*, ed. by Mark J Boda, Tremper Longman and Cristian G Rață (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 163-192 and the proposal of Alviero Nicacci, "Qohelet. Analisi sintattica, traduzione, composizione", *Liber Annuus* 54 (2004): 53-94, who also support the unity of book including Ecclesiastes 12,13-14.

- Title: author mentioned in third-person (1,1)
- A poem about the brevity and insignificance of life (1,2-11)
- B wisdom's failure to discover life's meaning (1,12-2:26)
- C poem about time (3,1-15)
- D center: fear God! (3,16-6,12)
- C' poem about time revisited (7,1-14)
- B' wisdom's failure revisited (7,15-10,19)
- A' poem about life's brevity revisited (10,20-12,8)
- Conclusion: author mentioned in third person (12,9-14)

This structure is particularly relevant in the current climate of the academic discussion of Ecclesiastes and its strong inclination to isolate the conclusion of the whole book. Note also that in its center is the theme of “fear of God” which reinforces even more its appearance in the final words of Qohelet.<sup>5</sup> From the point of view of his vocabulary, there are strict similarities between the conclusion in 12.13-14 and the autobiographical reflections of Qohelet: 78% of the words in the epilogue appear in the autobiographical passages and almost half of the words of the epilogue can be described as idiomatic expressions and favorites in Ecclesiastes.<sup>6</sup> With respect to chapter 12 of the book, there are indications for an eschatological reading. According to Jacques Doukhan:

In chapter 12 the orientation shifts from an individual to a cosmic perspective. While the call to remember Creation in 11:7 was related only to the personal life, ‘if a man lives many years,’ the call to remember Creation in 12:1 is related to cosmic events: ‘the sun and the light I and the moon and the stars grow dark’ (12:2, NIV). While the call to think of judgment in 11:9 was related to individual judgment, ‘God will bring you into judgment,’ the reference to judgment in 12:14 is cosmic.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> “The highlighted position of the central unit exhorting the audience to ‘fear of God’ (5,1-7 [4,17-5,6]), together with the equally highlighted position of the final conclusion, which likewise urges listeners to ‘fear of God’ (12,9-14), suggests the central importance of this theme to the author”. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 197.

<sup>6</sup> A. G Shead, “Reading Ecclesiastes Epilogically”, *Tyndalle Bulletin* 48 (1997): 72-75. Michael Shepherd designates Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 as a “microcosm of the book’s verbal system”. *The Verbal System of Biblical Aramaic: a Distributional Approach*, Studies in Biblical Literature vol. 116 (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 96.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Doukhan, *All is Vanity. Ecclesiastes* (Idaho: Pacific Press, 2006), 119.

Notice the phraseology and motifs present in both verses:<sup>8</sup>

וְדַע כִּי עַל-כָּל-אֲלֹהִים יִבְיָאֵף הָאֱלֹהִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט

“But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (11,9).

כִּי אֶת-כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים יָבֵא בְּמִשְׁפָּט

“For God shall bring every work into judgment” (12,14).

The same happens with the theme of death, present throughout the work, and in chapter 12 receives special attention (9,5-6; 12,7).<sup>9</sup> In this context, where the life of this world is dominated by הַבָּל, “the two-fold response admonishing the enjoyment of life and the fear of God function together to provide a balanced paradigm for living in expectation of the inevitability of death”.<sup>10</sup> The eschatological reading of chapter 12 counts on an important historical tradition and at present is shared by some scholars in the book.<sup>11</sup> The images of darkness and fog (sun and stars,

<sup>8</sup> Vittoria D’Alario, *Il libro del Qohelet. Struttura letteraria e retorica* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1992), 172. The text of Ecclesiastes 3,17 already anticipated this crucial topic: “I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked (אֶת-הַצְדִּיק וְאֶת-הַרָשָׁע יִשְׁפֹּט) הָאֱלֹהִים): for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.”

<sup>9</sup> Christoph Berner points out, “throughout the Hebrew Bible, there is a wide variety of writings and passages which deal with evil and death in light of present and future existence. Yet, there is hardly a place where these issues are treated more distinctly and more radically as in the Book of Qohelet”, “Evil and Death in the Book of Qohelet”, in *Evil and Death. Conceptions of the Human in Biblical, Early Jewish, Greco-Roman and Egyptian Literature*, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies, vol. 18 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 57; For Lategan in Ecclesiastes, “life-death relation is characterized by a tension”. Werner Andre Lategan, “The Theological Dialectic of Creation and Death in Hebrew Bible Wisdom Traditions” (PhD Dissertation, University of Groningen, 2009), 181.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Alan Fuhr JR, *An analysis of the inter-dependency of the prominent motifs within the Book of Qohelet* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 179.

<sup>11</sup> See the excellent and complete study of C. L. Seow, “Qohelet’s Eschatological Poem”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118, n.º 2 (1999): 209-234; and also Thomas Kruger, “Dekonstruktion und rekonstruktion prophetischer eschatologie im Qohelet-Buch”, in “*Jedes Ding Hat Seine Zeit ...*”: *Studien Zur Israelitischen und Altorientalischen Weisheit*, ed. A. A. Diesel, G. R. Lehmann, E. Otto and A. Wagner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 107-129.

הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְהָאֵזֶר וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְהַכּוֹכָבִים),<sup>12</sup> terror and desolation in the day of the Lord (-יּוֹם שֶׁ-), cessation of commercial activities and daily routine,<sup>13</sup> with other images of apocalyptic features paint an eschatological portrait faithful to the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible. In the own words of C. L. Seow:

The poem (chapter 12) as it stands in vv. 2-7 is no longer about old age *per se*, although traditional sayings-perhaps even an old poem- about old age may lie in the background. The poet now portrays the demise of human life in entirely eschatological terms. All the images in vv. 2-7 are consistent with the author's intent to depict a permanent end of human existence and, hence, the end of all possibilities to enjoy life either on earth or in the hereafter.<sup>14</sup>

### The Epilogue of Qohelet: Subversion of Wisdom (12,9-14)

As we approach the more immediate context of the epilogue, the last verses of Qohelet are part of the textual unit of chapter 12,9-14. Although some doubt the authenticity of the passage speculating the presence of a second author or editor,<sup>15</sup> the fact is that as indicated at the beginning of this article, the final verses of Ecclesiastes share the vocabulary and ideology of the whole work. For the purposes of our current research, I would like to point out some relevant aspects of the relationship between

<sup>12</sup> Seow says about it: “The sun is mentioned thirty-five times, but now, in its final appearance, the sun is *darkened*. In the prologue of the book (1:2-11), one finds the sun shining, as humanity toils and generations come and go. The sun rises and sets as part of a seemingly endless and wearisome routine... The poet, however, now goes further to include even the luminaries of the night- the moon and the stars- in the *cosmic darkening*”, Seow, “Qohelet’s Eschatological Poem”, 214. The cursive in mine.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 217. In addition the author points out: “Life’s routines are interrupted not only at home, but also in the public places. The double-doors (דְּלֶתַיִם) of the street-bazaar are closed (v. 4a). The scene is the street-bazaar (שׁוּק), the center of economic and social activities in the city. The closing of the doors leading into the שׁוּק, therefore, means the cessation of lively commerce and social intercourse.”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>15</sup> For example, James Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes. A commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 45. For a complete discussion of the different proposals on the authorship of the epilogue, Michael Fox, *A time to tear down and a time to build up*, 363-377.

these verses before fully introducing ourselves to the last two verses of the book.

In the first place, the motif of wisdom reappears from the personal tone of Salomon (in third person singular). His words remind us of chapter 2 and therefore fall into the autobiographical account. In this sense, "it is a pursuit of knowledge and understanding about human existence that exceeds anything else in Israel's wisdom tradition".<sup>16</sup> The relationship between the concepts of "knowledge" (דַּעַת) and "teaching" (לַמֵּד), of verse 9 is often associated in the Hebrew Bible with God (Ps 94,10; 119,66; cf. Job 21,22; Isa 40,14).<sup>17</sup> The book of Qohelet reflects its didactic nature having as its main concern the formation of character.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the four-fold repetition of lexeme דְּבָרִים operates as *leitwort* (word guide),<sup>19</sup> providing cohesion to the whole textual unit.<sup>20</sup> "This resource is part of a major rhetorical strategy of the book, the repetition of key words and phrases that signal central themes in Qohelet's teaching":<sup>21</sup>

"Pleasant words" דְּבָרֵי־חַפְצֵי

"Words of truth" דְּבָרֵי־אֱמֶת

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Balentine, "Wisdom", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, ed. Stephen B. Chapman and Marvin A. Sweeney (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 287.

<sup>17</sup> Mark J. Boda, "Speaking into the Silence: the epilogue of Ecclesiastes", in *The words of the wise are like goads. Engaging Qoheleth in the 21st century*, ed. Mark J Boda, Tremper Longman III and Cristian G. Rață (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 264. The author indicates that "this connection among knowledge, teaching, and God echoes the regular identification of God as the source of knowledge (compare with 2,6; 3,20)".

<sup>18</sup> Naoto Kamano, *Cosmology and character. Qohelet's pedagogy from a rhetorical-critical perspective* (Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 1-26.

<sup>19</sup> Yairah Amit, "The multi-purpose 'leading word' and the problems of its usage", *Prooftexts* 9 (1989): 95-114.

<sup>20</sup> Is interesting that in 3 occasions דְּבָרִים is utilized in a plural form (12,10-11), but in the verse 13 it change to singular form. This change suggests in our interpretation an intentional contrast between human and divine wisdom.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Balentine, "Wisdom", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, 287.

“Words of the wise” דְּבַרֵי חֲכָמִים

“Whole matter (word)” דְּבַר הַכֹּל

In a kind of *in crescendo* movement, Qohelet reflects from his own experience on human wisdom, its depths and reaches, and where the element of the art of words, its eloquent command of language, is the highest expression of human knowledge, the reason *par excellence* of the wise.<sup>22</sup>

However, for the king of Israel this wisdom is unable to solve the dilemma of the הַכֹּל in the world, of all human efforts to attain the highest knowledge. The creation of many books (סֵפֶר “writings,” “scrolls”), and the incessant study (לְהִגֵּן), emphasize once again the paradigm of the sage and his outstanding position not only in the world of the ancient Near East but also for all epochs of human history. The last verses of Qohelet offer us the best definition of divine wisdom as the sum of authentic superior knowledge.<sup>23</sup>

### The Conclusion of the Whole Matter

So far we have seen how the book of Ecclesiastes conforms to a symmetric and compact literary design, and that in the last section of the work its author culminates with an eschatological picture. The verses below, which are in fact the last of the book, offer the conclusion of its author in a clear language and invites the reader, as will be seen towards the end of this article, one of the most solemn passages of the Bible that will reach the end of time.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Paul Delnero, “Scholarship and inquiry in early Mesopotamia”, *Journal of ancient near eastern history* (2016): 1-35.

<sup>23</sup> Martin A. Shields writes the following: “The words of the sages, against which the epilogist has previously warned the reader, are not considered essential for human beings, whereas fearing God and keeping his commands (words) are essential. In order to emphasize this point further, the epilogist offers one final reason that fearing God and keeping his commands are essential, as opposed to heeding the advice of the sages, in the final verse of the book”, *The end of the wisdom. a reappraisal of the historical and canonical function of Ecclesiastes* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 100.



The opening sentence sets the tone of the entire epilogue: סוף דְּבָרָה, הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter" (12,13a). The word סוף "end," translated by "conclusion" (NKJV), interestingly is a wordplay with its synonym in the previous verse (קֵץ). In a kind of ironic contrast, Qohelet presents what to him, under divine inspiration, constitutes the true end of human existence. In other words, the fear of God "comes not as the *beginning* of wisdom, but rather, it stands as its *end*".<sup>24</sup>

Salomon has deconstructed the classical paradigm of the sage, his encyclopedic knowledge and his verbal eloquence, not because he considers this human model essentially negative, but rather because for Salomon it is sterile without the wisdom that comes from the Most High God. The speech or word of conclusion (דְּבָרָה), refers to everything expressed by the author in his writing, confirmed by his habitual use since the beginning of his reflection (1,1) and reiterated in 12,9. But more important is that, everything indicates, the latter דְּבָרָה is presented as a great *theological synthesis* of the Hebrew Bible where the essence of human being is merged ("this is the whole of man": anthropology), together with his final historical goal in the future (judgment: eschatology). The essence of biblical piety is modeled from the horizon of divine judgment. All this informs us of the universal sense of the passage with its theological background in the language of creation:

Qohelet's strong preference for using אָדָם ("man") at a rate four times greater than אִישׁ ("man") cannot be casually dismissed. He uses the term to identify both himself in particular and humanity in general. Seow is one of only a few who appreciate the gravity of אָדָם in Ecclesiastes. Aside from minor Hebrew particles, the word טוֹב ("good") occurs the most in the book (51×) followed by רָאָה ("see," 47×), and then אָדָם (43×). This is the first of several strong signs of the anthropological question in Ecclesiastes, but it is also a possible indication that the book is echoing the theology and anthropology of Gen 1–3. Just consider the fact that, of the 44 uses of אָדָם in Genesis, 20 of them (half!) are in chs. 2–3.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Kruger, *Qoheleth*, 214.

Charles Forman's claim that Qohelet wrote with a copy of Gen 1–11 in hand led Crenshaw to respond skeptically that this “surely exaggerates things.”<sup>25</sup>

### Fear God and Keep his Commandments: Qohelet and the Hebrew Bible

Now, the main phrases that are the object of the present investigation are framed in this exposition of universal character of Qohelet. It is a call of solemn exhortation against the great dilemmas of the human being (injustice- pain-death), which are under the shadow of הַבְּלָה. It's a universal appeal.<sup>26</sup>

First, the phrase **יִרְאָה אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וְאָתַם־מִצְוֹתָיו שְׂמֹר**, “fear God and keep his commandments,” contains two imperative verbs in singular, which customizes the sentence and then makes the responsibility of its response fall on each individual who hears it. Although the command to keep the commandments is not an explicit motif in the work, if it is present in the various situations described by Salomon, both in cases

<sup>25</sup> Ryan P. O'Dowd, “Epistemology in Ecclesiastes: remembering what it means to be human”, in *The Words of the Wise are like Goads. Engaging Qoheleth in the 21st Century*, ed. Mark J Boda, Tremper Longman III and Cristian G. Rață (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 202. Note the philosophical implications for Craig Bartholomew, “Ecclesiastes 12,13 contains the evocative expression “all the man”, that is, the whole of what constitutes being human. Intriguingly, the expression **כָּל־הָאָדָם** (“all the man”) is used in a similar way in 7,2 and 5,17[ET 18]. In 5,17[18], it is used in the context of one of the *carpe diem* passages whereas, in 7:2, it is used in relation to its being better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting because this is **כָּל־הָאָדָם** (“all the man”). Scholars translate this expression in different ways, but attention to its repetition in these three verses is revealing. Qohelet's question about the value of work leads him inevitably to the question of what it means to be human. Questions about how we know, who we are, and what the nature of our world is—epistemology, anthropology, and ontology—are always linked, just as they are in Ecclesiastes”; “The theology of Ecclesiastes”, in *The Words of the Wise are like Goads*, 371.

<sup>26</sup> The use of generic noun **אָדָם** + the definite article in 12,13 confirms this interpretation, where the biblical author has in mind an audience that is beyond the borders of Israel. According to Baranowski, “the article is a powerful tool in advancing discourse and thought. Indeed, it serves as a means of organizing information and it contributes to building a specific perspective in which the author perceives reality”, Krzysztof J. Baranowski, “The article in the Book of Qoheleth”, in *Ἐν πάσῃ γραμματικῇ καὶ σοφίᾳ saggi di linguistica ebraica in onore di Alviero Niccacci*, ed. Gregor Geiger (Milano/Jerusalem: Edizioni Terra Santa/Franciscan Printing Press, 2011), 48.

of human injustice and also in matters of cult.<sup>27</sup> What is interesting, however, is that as we shall see later, the combination of the fear of God and his commandments is not an invention of Qohelet but is part of a long biblical tradition and at the conclusion of the book the wise links it with which we can call the character of the human being (the "everything" of man).<sup>28</sup> In other words, what Qohelet does is to elaborate as a thinker a theological synthesis that covers much of the Holy Scriptures. Hence the importance of our passage.

Secondly, the expression כל האדם "man's all" (NKJV), a unique expression in the Hebrew Bible, is used in other three occasion in the same book (3,13; 5,18 and 7,2). It seems to refer to the totality of the experience of human life: *human character*.

'All' is repeated three times in vv. 13b-14, an 'interanimation of words' that defines 'the all' which has been heard in terms of 'every man,' 'every deed,' and 'every hidden thing.' The distinctive use of 'all' with the article is seen in the inner frame: ("the all" is vanity), thus giving v. 13a the sense the whole of life.<sup>29</sup>

In other words, the singular sentence points to the highest duty of man, the sum of the search for the most important meaning of human life.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> An exemplary case is the commentary of Ecl 5,1-7 [TM 4,17-5,6] of Dt 23,22-24, and that has as its background Nm 15,22-31 (*cf.* Lv 4,2; 22, 27-30). "Qohelet is well acquainted with the cultus of temple (5,1-7), as does the reference to 'clean,' and 'unclean' in 9,2. This evidence of awareness of pentateuchal cultic legislation needs to be combined with the vocabulary in Ecclesiastes that also appears to relate to the domain of torah, namely 'judgment' (3,17; 11,19), 'sinner' (2,26; 5,5; [4]; 8,12), 'wicked' and 'righteous' (3,17), 'wickedness [is folly]' (7,25), 'one who pleases God' versus 'the sinner' (7,26), and so on. Many try to minimize the religious and ethical nuance of this vocabulary in Ecclesiastes", Craig G. Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 88.

<sup>28</sup> Commonly translated as "for this is man's all (the duty)", or "for all men", the truth is that both translations are valid grammatical options, although the first one reflect better the moral sense of the sentence. In addition, the vocabulary of verses 13 and 14 framed within the context of the final judgment seems to support this option.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew G. Shead, "Reading Ecclesiastes epilogically", 70.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Enns, "kol ha-'adam and the evaluation of Qohelet's wisdom in Qoh 12:13, or the 'A is so, and what's more, B' theology of Ecclesiastes", in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. H. Najman and J. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 127.

Third, the fear of God has been a motif developed in Ecclesiastes previously and that already reveals the early interest of its author on this subject. In the important passage of 5,7 [TM 5,6] one can observe the same syntactic construction used in 12: 13b. This linguistic connection shares a common theological background on proper conduct in the presence of God with the importance of obeying the commandments of God,<sup>31</sup> that is, for Qohelet both realities are related. The fear of God corresponds to a way of life and conduct (ethics) that would be expressed more concretely in the observance of the law of God. The union of both realities in the life of the human being is the biblical definition of a just man.<sup>32</sup> Selected texts in dialogue with Ecclesiastes can help us to better illustrate this truth. The first comes from Deuteronomy:

Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, *that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments* (לְמַעַן תִּירָא אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־כָּל־חֻקֹּתָיו וּמִצְוֹתָיו וְלִשְׁמֹר אֶת־כָּל־חֻקֹּתָיו וּמִצְוֹתָיו ), which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. (Deut 6,1-2).

O that there were such an heart in them, *that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always* (וְלִשְׁמֹר אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי כְּלַיְהִימִים לָהֶם לִירְאָה אֶת־יְיָ וְלִשְׁמֹר ), that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! (Deut 5,29).

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, *but to fear the Lord your God* (אִם־לִירְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ ), to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, *and to keep the commandments of the Lord* (וְלִשְׁמֹר אֶת־מִצְוֹת יְיָ ), and His statutes which I command you today for your good? Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that *is* in it. (Deut 10:12-14).

<sup>31</sup> Richard Alan Fuhr Jr., *An analysis of the inter-dependency...*, 171.

<sup>32</sup> See the excellent reflection of Elaine A. Goodfrined, "Ethical theory and practice in the Hebrew Bible", in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Ethics and Morality*, ed. Elliot N. Dorff and Jonathan K. Crane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 35-50.

As can be seen, the motif of God's fear and keeping his commandments are a clear paradigm or model that appear together permanently. Edward J Woods comments:

The Lord asks for five things which are frequently addressed throughout the book. The first is *fear* (reverence), which importantly *sets the foundation* for all the other attitudes that follow... The fifth response of obeying the Lord's commands and decrees for your own good (v. 13) indicates that the law was not a burden to be borne, but was Israel's life in all its fullness (32:47). But basic to all obedience is fear (reverence) of God (5:29) and love of God (6:4-19). People in whom these attitudes are found will walk in God's ways, serve him, and keep his laws.<sup>33</sup>

In the passage already it can be observed also that the theology of God as Creator and its law as its supreme expression of wisdom are also part of these motif, now explicitly pointed out in Deuteronomy 4:<sup>34</sup>

Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom (חִכְמָה) and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people (Deut 4:6).<sup>35</sup>

In the literature of the Psalms the binomial "fear of God and keep his commandments" is an important piece of his theological structure. Thanks to the predominance of poetic texts, several of his passages expand the meaning of his messages along with other notions such as knowledge and justice:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;

<sup>33</sup> Edward J Woods, *Deuteronomy. An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: IVP, 2011), 172, 173. The emphasis is mine. For other Also see, Bill Arnold, "The Love-Fear Antinomy in Deuteronomy 5-11", *Vetus Testamentum* 61 (2011): 551-569.

<sup>34</sup> For this relations, see Thomas Krüger, "Israel's law and wisdom according to Deut 4:5-8", in *Wisdom and Torah: the Reception of 'Torah' in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. by Bernd Schipper and D. Andrew Teeter (Leiden: BRILL, 2013), 35-54, although its interesting lights are seriously affected by the late dating of the texts. Blenkinsopp remarks, "the law is therefore *the* expression of divine wisdom made available to Israel and, as such, can compete on more that equal terms with the vaunted wisdom of the nations", Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament the Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 131.

<sup>35</sup> Further Deut 8,1 concludes that the commandments of God are life for the children of Israel: "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers" (Dt. 8,1).

A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.  
His praise endures forever (Psalm 111,10).

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord,  
Who delights greatly in His commandments (Psalm 112,1).

Once again the two motifs appear, here explicitly related thanks to the use of *parallelism* with notions of wisdom and knowledge. In the second example, the close link between the fear of the Lord and his commandments makes them inseparable. In spite of the innumerable classifications that continue being created on the main poetic resource of the Bible, the truth is that the relation between its lines fulfills a semantic function, thus expanding the meaning of the Hebrew verse.<sup>36</sup> With this in mind, notice the following texts that delve deeper into the richness of meanings:

The secret of the Lord (intimacy communion) is with those who fear Him,  
And He will show them *His covenant* (Psalm 25,14).

Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those *who fear Him*,  
On those who hope in His mercy (Psalm 33,18).

The point to be made is that in the Psalter the notions of the fear of God and the commandments, in addition to portraying them united, are associated mainly with notions of justice and cultic purity:<sup>37</sup>

The mouth of the *righteous* speaks wisdom,  
And his tongue talks of *justice*.  
*The law* of his God *is* in his heart;  
None of *his steps* shall slide (37,30-31).

For I have kept the ways of the Lord,  
And have not wickedly departed from my God.  
For all *His judgments* were before me,

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<sup>36</sup> Edward L. Greenstein and Michael P. O'Connor, "Parallelism", in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 997-999.

<sup>37</sup> For an acute study on these important relationships, John T. Willis, "Ethics in a cultic setting", in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics*, ed. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis (New York: Ktav, 1974), 147-63; and Philip Sumpter, "The Coherence of Psalms 15-24", *Biblica* 94 (2013): 186-219.

And I did not put away *His statutes* from me.  
 I was also *blameless* before Him,  
 And I kept myself from my *iniquity*.  
 Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to *my righteousness*,  
 According to the *cleanness of my hands* in His sight (18,21-23).

The Psalms, as faithful witnesses of the ancient Hebrew thought, go a step further for to offer extended semantic notions relating to each other the cultic and personal spheres. The purpose of biblical writers is to demonstrate how the sacred law of God encompasses and affects every dimension of the human being. However, we should not lose sight of the concrete aspects of these poetic descriptions that point to real experiences. In this direction the following is said,

We must however bear in mind that actually three were only two alternatives: either a man was 'righteous' (צדיק) before Yahweh or he was an evil-doer (עשׂר), one who was at fault and thus had no standing before God. There is no room for any intermediate state, or for any of the finer shades so familiar in human evaluations... The worshipper always represents himself as one who lives *wholly* with God, who has put his whole trust in him and always obeyed him implicitly.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, two more examples are Psalms 1 and 19, which together with 119 constitute the highest expressions of meaning of the law of God in the hymnal of Israel:

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;  
 The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;  
 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
 The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;  
 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;  
 The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.  
 More to be desired are they than gold,  
 Yea, than much fine gold;  
 Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.  
 Moreover by them Your servant is warned,  
 And in keeping them there is great reward (19,7-11).

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<sup>38</sup> Gerhard von Rad, "Righteousness' and 'life' in the cultic language of the Psalms", in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 250.

This Psalm, which is an exaltation of the Torah,<sup>39</sup> describes as a diamond the various faces of the Lord's teaching of his principles of justice and purity to pass through ideas of knowledge and joy. However, the Ten Commandments seem to be the basis of the argument of the psalmist, as it was in its origins where all the legal corpus of ancient Israel turned out to be a hermeneutic or explanatory extension to fully record the principles of its law in the human heart.<sup>40</sup> As for Psalm 1, the gateway to the Psalter, lay its foundations from its first words:

Blessed is the man  
 Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
 Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
 Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;  
 But his delight is in the law of the Lord (בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה),  
 And in His law (וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ) he meditates day and night (Psalm 1,1-2).

Considered a true masterpiece of Hebrew-biblical poetry,<sup>41</sup> its importance lies, besides being the introductory poem of the Psalter, in serving as its theological program. The two ethical categories of the just and the bad are contrasted in the Psalm, where the first is characterized by his dedication to the study of law/torah. Thanks to that law they are called righteous (צַדִּיקִים, 1,6), only they will be standing on the day of judgment (בְּמִשְׁפָּט). For purposes of our investigation, two aspects are notorious in this Psalm: first, God's law occupies a central place as the ethical standard of the righteous, and second, the poem seems to be strongly oriented towards an eschatological culmination: the final judgment.<sup>42</sup> In the first

<sup>39</sup> David N. Freedman, *Psalm 119. The Exaltation of Torah* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1999), and Kent A. Reynolds, *Torah As Teacher: The Exemplary Torah Student in Psalm 119*, volume 137 of *Vetus Testamentum Supplements Series* (Leiden: BRILL, 2010).

<sup>40</sup> An interesting reading from this perspective is the beautiful book of Gordon Wenham, *Psalms as Torah. Reading Biblical Song Ethically* (Gran Rapid, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), and particularly the chapters "The concept of the Law in the Psalms" and "Law in the Psalter."

<sup>41</sup> C. L. Seow, "An exquisitely poetic introduction to the psalter", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132.2 (2013): 275-293.

<sup>42</sup> Seow, "An Exquisitely Poetic Introduction to the Psalter", note also the close literary relationship between Psalms 1 and 2, which would confirm this eschatological feature of the first psalm.



case, it has also been noted that the important place of the law in the Psalm reflects a similar phenomenon with the second part of the biblical canon thanks to the strict linguistic parallel between Psalm 1,6 and Joshua 1,8.<sup>43</sup>

In the words of Gordon Wenham,

just as the book of Psalms opens the third part of the Hebrew canon, so the book of Joshua opens the second part, the Prophets. In this way, the second and third parts of the Old Testament canon both point back to the Torah (the Law), the first part of the canon, as foundational for a righteous and successful life.<sup>44</sup>

In the second, the horizon of a future judgment for the just and unjust establishes unsuspected connections with the book of Ecclesiastes, but which are actually present throughout the Holy Scriptures.<sup>45</sup> The novel is for contemporary exegesis, often unable to notice these relationships, but at the same time confronts us with a way of thinking where it can see issues that are part of the foundation of biblical faith and a wider panorama inside the plot of the plan of salvation. All this moves towards its eschatological culmination as presented in the last verses of Qohelet.

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<sup>43</sup> In the sanctuary of ancient Israel was the sacred law of God in the most holy place. A rich and extensive theology is still discovered in these passages. For this relations see my article, "A Theological Study of the Defilement and Cleansing of the Hebrew Sanctuary", in *The Heavenly Sanctuary and its Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Richard M. Davidson, David Asmat, Joel Iparraguirre (Ñaña, Lima: Andrews University and Universidad Peruana Union), forthcoming 2018 (in English and Spanish).

<sup>44</sup> Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 79; See also Benjamin D. Sommer, "Psalm 1 and the canonical shaping of jewish scripture", in *Jewish Biblical Theology. Perspectives and Case Studies*, ed. by Isaac Kalimi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 199-221.

<sup>45</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, "Divine Judgment", in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 815-856. It is important to note that the theological relationship between the concepts of justice, wisdom, and purity with respect to the character of the eschatological remnant of God can be observed in passages such as Daniel 12: 3, 9 and in the New Testament in the letter to the Romans and Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 19: 8 [white robes as a symbol of justice]. The concept of biblical justice needs to be addressed in relation to the Ten Commandments. As we try to show in our study, God's law is presented as the concrete expression of God's justice. Consult also the recent study of Roy Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians. Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

In the book of Proverbs the “fear of God” and “keeping his commandments” are his theological foundation.<sup>46</sup> From its introduction it is made clear what the objective of his work is:

To know wisdom and instruction,  
 To perceive the words of understanding,  
 To receive the instruction of wisdom,  
 Justice, judgment, and equity;  
 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,  
 But fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov 1:2-3, 7).

The wisdom imparted by the sage is not an abstract or unreachable knowledge, only for a few. On the contrary, wisdom finds its first steps in a personal relationship with God.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, “the word beginning (*re’shit*), has the sense not only of ‘first’ but also of ‘foundation’ or even ‘source.’ It may not be stretching the concept too far to think the beginning of wisdom functioning as a *presupposition* or preunderstanding”.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout the sapiential writing and thanks to its permanent use of repetition as a stylistic and pedagogical resource,<sup>49</sup> the book of Proverbs manages to capture the theological purpose of the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom: the formation of the character:<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Tremper Longman III, “Fear of God”, in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, & Writings*, ed. by Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 201, especially the first one.

<sup>47</sup> Jacques Doukhan, *Proverbs. The Fear of God is the Beginning of Wisdom* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2014), 11-21.

<sup>48</sup> Tremper Longman III, “Fear of God”, 202.

<sup>49</sup> Shamir Yona, “Exegetical and stylistic analysis of a number of aphorisms in the Book of Proverbs: mitigation of monotony in repetitions in parallel texts”, in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Ronald L. Troxel, Kelvin G. Friebe, and Dennis R. Magary (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 155-165; and more recently, Knut M. Heim, “Poetic imagination in Proverbs. Variant repetitions and the nature of poetry”, *Supplements, Bulletin for Biblical Research* 4 (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Shown extensively in the recent study of Anne W. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil;  
Pride and arrogance and the evil way  
And the perverse mouth I hate (Prov 8,13).

In mercy and truth  
Atonement is provided for iniquity;  
And by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil (Prov 16,6).

These few examples come to complete the picture that we have tried so far to draw. The motives of "fear of God" and "keeping his commandments" seek the development of the character of man as an integral, just and living in obedience to the will of God. The archetype that exemplifies this reality is the pious Job, epitome of justice:<sup>51</sup>

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless (תָּם) and upright (יָשָׁר), and one who feared God (וַיִּרָא אֱלֹהִים) and shunned evil (וְנָקַר מַרְעָ) (Job 1,1).

The prologue, according to Balentine, uses four terms to establish the extraordinary piety of Job: the adjectives תָּם and יָשָׁר to describe his character, and the verbal expression וַיִּרָא אֱלֹהִים and וְנָקַר מַרְעָ to describe his ethics.<sup>52</sup> Two passages of the same book along with other biblical texts which confirm this reading and elucidate our study better:

Is not your reverence (יִרְאָה) your confidence? And the integrity (תָּם) of your ways your hope? (Job 4,6).

<sup>51</sup> See the valuable comments of Adele Berlin, *Poetic and Interpretation of Biblical Poetry* (Winona Lake, IN: 1994 [1983]), 41-42.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Balentine, "Inside the 'sanctuary of silence.' the moral-ethical demands of suffering", in *Character Ethics and the Old Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture*, ed. M. D. Carroll R. y J. E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 66; See also, "Character formed in the crucible: Job's relationship with God and Joban character ethics", *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 3, n.º 1 (2009): 1-16. The Job's character contains eschatological implications as demonstrated by Lael Caesar, "Job as paradigm for the eschaton", *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11/1-2 (2000): 148-162. The book of Job needs to be studied much more from this last perspective.

And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord (יִרְאָה), that is wisdom (חֲכָמָה),  
And to depart from evil (וְסוּר מֵרָע) is understanding (Job 28,28).

And he commanded them, saying, ‘Thus you shall act in the fear of the Lord  
(בְּיִרְאֵת יְהוָה), faithfully and with a loyal heart’ (2 Chr 19,9).

Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God (יִרְאֵי  
אֱלֹהִים), men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers  
of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens (Ex 18,21).

And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away  
from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts (וְאֶת־יִרְאֵתִי אֶתֵּן  
בָּם), so that they will not depart from Me” (Jer 32,40).

And I will come near you for judgment;  
I will be a swift witness  
Against sorcerers,  
Against adulterers,  
Against perjurers,  
Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans,  
And against those who turn away an alien-  
Because they do not fear Me (לֹא יִרְאוּנִי),  
Says the Lord of hosts (Mal 3,5).

Now therefore, fear the Lord (וְעַתָּה יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה), serve Him in sincerity and in  
truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the  
River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! (Josh 24,14).

This last passage is a good summary of the real reaches of the fear of God throughout the Hebrew Bible. This whole journey allows us to interpret, first, that the “fear of God” and “keep his commandments” are the basis of the formation of the character in the Bible,<sup>53</sup> the most important pillars in the construction of human life; and second, that these two motifs are presented by Qohelet as the sum of divine wisdom

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<sup>53</sup> In his important work, James L. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel. Across the Deadening Silence*, Anchor Bible Reference Library, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 1, recognize that the main goal of education in ancient Israel was the formation of *character*.

which has been revealed to men in preparation for judgment at the end of time: "The general meaning of the statement is fairly clear: fearing God and obeying his commandments is the most important thing a man or a woman can do".<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusions

- The epilogue of the book of Ecclesiastes is an integral part of the work. From the literary and theological point of view the last verses are a synthesis of both the thinking of its author as well as biblical wisdom in general.
- The most immediate textual unit of Ecclesiastes 12,9-14 presents us with a contrast between human wisdom and its most important paradigm in the figure of learned scholar, eloquent speaker and author. For Salomon, who professed this experience in your own flesh, he concluded under divine inspiration that there is a much more exalted and important wisdom: the fear of God and keeping his commandments.<sup>55</sup>
- The sentence "fear God and keep his commandments," designates the most important conceptual binomial in Qohelet and in the Hebrew Bible. From the Pentateuch to the book of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and prophetic texts, the theological synthesis written by Solomon in the twilight of his life can be considered the heart of biblical wisdom<sup>56</sup> and of the ethical demands of God as Creator of man and the world.

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<sup>54</sup> Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Winona Lake, IN: Eerdmans, 1998), 282; In addition he adds, "he had an eschatological judgment in mind", 283, and in other place, "indeed, here we have the fear of God used in conjunction with the further injunction to obedience, specifically, obedience to the law and living in the light of the future judgment of God", "The 'Fear of God' in the Book of Ecclesiastes", *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 25, n.º 1 (2015): 20.

<sup>55</sup> Gerald H. Wilson calls these two realities as "the origin and culmination of true wisdom", "'The words of the wise'. The intent and significance of Qohelet 12:9-14", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103, n.º 2 (1984): 181.

<sup>56</sup> Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*, 15. It points out this with regard to the fear of the Lord.

The concepts studied here allow us to conclude that the sacred Law of God has been and will forever be the great norm of behavior of the universe and human beings.<sup>57</sup> It was for the wise Salomon as well as for most of the biblical writers. The Ten Commandments are the expression of the character of God and his righteousness. What the book of Ecclesiastes has left us recorded in the conclusion of his writing is the sum of the divine wisdom that has in its center the principles of the government of the divine Lawgiver. The association of the concepts of fear of God and obedience to his commandments define the *character* of the human being with the desire to assure him fullness of joy and life, and prepare him for judgment before his Creator:

It is not money or lands or position but the possession of a Christlike character, that will open to us the gates of Paradise. It is not dignity, it is not intellectual attainments, that will win for us the crown of immortality. Only the meek and lowly ones, who have made God their efficiency, will receive this gift.<sup>58</sup>

Faced with human injustice and misery, the inevitable problem of suffering and death, and the tragic ultimate reality that everything is *הֶבֶל*, Salomon left us registered in the last days of his life that the only solution to the instability of human existence is the fear of God and obedience to his commandments: the highest goal that sums up humanity's quest for meaning.<sup>59</sup> The last verses of Qohelet exhort us to

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<sup>57</sup> “God’s law reaches the feelings and motives, as well as the outward acts. It reveals the secrets of the heart, flashing light upon things before buried in darkness. God knows every thought, every purpose, every plan, every motive. The books of heaven record the sins that would have been committed had there been opportunity. God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. By His law He measures every work into judgment, with every secret thing. By His law He measures the character of every man”, (“Ellen G. White Comments”, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978], 5:1085).

<sup>58</sup> Ellen White, “Our Work”, *Southern Watchman* 12 (April 16, 1903): 113. In other place she points out: “Many are deceiving themselves by thinking that the character will be transformed at the coming of Christ, but there will be not conversion of heart at His appearing. Our defects of character must here be repented of, and through the grace of Christ we must overcome them while probation shall last. This is the place for fitting up for the family above”, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, TN.: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 319.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Enns, “kol ha-‘adam and the evaluation of Qohelet’s Wisdom in Qoh 12:13”, 128. These last verses are the answer, in our reading, to what Michael Fox considers the central concern

face life with a deep sense of the presence of God and every day to perfect a character in harmony with his holy precepts. This is the final call of God and the mission of his remnant people:

*Fear God* and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7).<sup>60</sup>

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of Ecclesiastes's book: the meaning of life; Michael V. Fox, "The innerstructure of Qohelet's thought", in *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom*, ed. A. Schoors (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), 225.

<sup>60</sup> "The text of Revelation 14 indicates that the proclamation of judgment anticipates the coming of the Son of Man and the salvation of the world (Revelation 14,14), suggesting the horizon of this passage of Ecclesiastes. Beyond the last words of Ecclesiastes on judgment, a new world is then expected-a new world of justice and peace, free from evil. For the first time wisdom will not fail, because God will finally have sorted out the good and the evil. The whole book of Ecclesiastes was aiming at this cleansing operation, the ultimate work of divine wisdom", Doukhan, *All is Vanity. Ecclesiastes*, 127.