

The background is a complex Renaissance-style painting. At the top, a large, ornate dome with a sunburst pattern is visible. Below it, a landscape with a body of water, a full moon, and a small boat is shown. On the left, a figure in a red robe stands on a rocky outcrop, looking out over the scene. The entire image is framed by a decorative border. The text 'Сергиуш Манжиевский' is written in white at the top center.

Сергиуш Манжиевский

**ECCLESIASTES A Poetic
Rendering A Fresh
Look at a Timeless
Masterpiece of Wisdom**

Сергиуш Манжиевский **ECCLESIASTES A Poetic** **Rendering A Fresh Look at a** **Timeless Masterpiece of Wisdom**

<https://litres.ru/74304898>

SelfPub; 2026

Аннотация

Presented to those who seek the true purpose of life is a unique poetic paraphrase of the Book of Cohelet (Ecclesiastes), thoroughly cleansed of the age-old conformism and archaic officialese of past commentators. Author Sergiusz Manżyjewski, in collaboration with James Witkoff, presents a sharp, modern free verse where the ancient cosmic wisdom of King Solomon is fused with a rigorous, protective, and analytical gaze upon the realities of the material world. This edition is not a mere translation, but a sovereign manifesto and a shield for the human spirit. The authors firmly demonstrate that without Faith, life degenerates into thrall and vanity; yet, the determination of one's divine life-task and acting with absolute prudence provide man with a genuine celestial ward and true happiness under the sun. The book offers a crystal-clear lens through which the frantic world of vanity becomes entirely transparent, revealing a profound creative path.

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A Poetic Rendering

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FROM THE AUTHOR

An Appeal to the Thinking Reader

Dear friend!

The book you hold in your hands is not merely a tribute to the great poetry of the Old Testament, nor an attempt to rival the elegance of past translators' prose.

This is the result of a long spiritual quest, an analytical reflection, and, if you will, a personal existential challenge. The Book of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) has traditionally been seen as a manifesto of religious pessimism. Its textbook verdict—"vanity of vanities"—has, for centuries, left the thinking person in a dead-end of fatalism, seeming to affirm the meaninglessness of earthly existence. But I am deeply convinced that this great text conceals an entirely different, life-affirming code. And my goal is to help you decipher it.

The great book of Ecclesiastes is strikingly relevant even today; it helps us deeply contemplate our very existence. The vicissitudes of fate described in it are ones we sometimes witness daily in our own ordinary lives. The world around us may seem chaotic and unjust, but in my poetic rendering, I invite you to go beyond the conventional understanding of faith as a harsh, burdensome duty or as fear of the Almighty.

In the final part of my work, I took a bold step: I introduced into the concluding, key verse a category that is not originally present in the source text — the category of human happiness. In the whirlwind of days, the most important thing is not to despair, but to remain faithful to the unshakable moral principles set forth in the Torah. It is then that human life becomes truly meaningful, and you will find genuine, profound happiness even amidst the everyday vanity.

This book is written for those who are not afraid to think, to doubt, and to seek. I sincerely hope that my interpretation of the meaning of Ecclesiastes will open new spiritual landmarks for you and bring true enlightenment to your soul.

With best wishes on your journey of discovery, Sergiusz Manzhievsky

CHAPTER I

(1) The words and thoughts of Cohelet, the son of David, the sovereign King of Jerusalem!

(2) Vanity of vanities, — said Cohelet, — vanity of vanities all around, all is vanity.

(3) What profit hath a man from all his labor, toiling all his life in vain?

(4) Generations depart and generations arrive, yet the earth remains immutable, spinning headlong around its axis.

(5) The sun ariseth and the sun goeth down, yet tomorrow it will rise once more in its perpetual race,

(6) The sun travelleth toward the south, and maketh its turn to the north.

The wind whirlleth, and moveth, and bloweth, and whistleth, and roareth,

And returneth into its circuits, completing its rotation around the earth.

(7) All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea doth not overflow its banks;

The riverbeds remain full and deep, and almost never dry out or fade away.

(8) All things are wearisome, and no man can fathom the

fullness of this world;

The eyes are never satisfied with seeing, nor are the ears ever filled with a craving for new things to hear.

(9) That which hath been is that which shall be, and that which hath been done is that which shall be done;

And there is no new thing under the great luminaries: the sun and the moon.

(10) Is there anything whereof it may be said, "Behold, this is new, it cometh ahead"?

Nay, it hath been already in the ancient ages, which passed long before thee and me.

(11) Those in power distort the memory of the generations that have departed,

And of the subsequent ones to come, they shall surely warp and erase the trace.

Those who come after will never know the truth in all its manifestations and light,

(12) I, Cohelet, was King over Israel in Jerusalem, and in this I find no joy.

(13) And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom a sacred doctrine,

Concerning all that is done under heaven, across the earth, in everything and everywhere.

"A grievous task hath God laid upon the sons of men," — I came to the deep conviction,

"So that for the original sin, they should fear and ever hold Him in remembrance."

(14) I have seen all the works that are done under the sun,
And I drew the verdict — all is vanity and a headlong march into nowhere.

(15) Only the grave can straighten the hunchback's spine,
And that which is wanting cannot be numbered or computed for evermore.

(16) I communed with mine own heart, saying, "Lo, I have multiplied my wisdom,

And increased it more than all they that have been before me upon the throne;

Yea, my heart absorbed great wealth of wisdom and knowledge."

I summed it up, Yet nothing changed in the course of my life after that very day.

(17) And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly;

I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit, and nothing more than that.

(18) For in much wisdom is much vexation: multiplying

wisdom, thou growest only more sullen,

And he that increaseth knowledge increaseth disconsolate
sorrow for all things.

CHAPTER II

(1) I said in my heart, "Go to now, I will prove myself with mirth and know satisfaction,

"And behold, this also was but the very same meaningless vanity.

(2) I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of mirth, "Its profit is cast into doubt."

(3) I sought to indulge my flesh with wine, and the next morning I suffered, and was sick, and was filled with wrath...

(3) Though my heart was guided by wisdom all the while,
I resolved to hold fast unto folly for a season;
Till I might see how best the sons of men should act with all their stupidity,

In the fleeting days of their life, flying in the very face of fate.

(4) I made for myself great works: I builded houses and planted vineyards for my renown,

(5) I made myself splendid gardens and parks, setting therein all manner of fruit-bearing trees.

(6) I digged myself pools of water, and from them I watered the groves flourishing with timber;

(7) Besides those born in my household, I possessed menservants and maidservants with pleading eyes;

(7) Also I had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than all that were in Jerusalem before my days;

(8) I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasures of conquered kings and provinces;

I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men: the best in the world, —

Sumptuous chariots, choice horses, and a vast abundance of rare and exquisite delicacies.

(9) So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem;

Also my wisdom remained with me, guiding my path in this arduous task.

(10) And whatsoever mine eyes desired and fiercely craved, I kept not from them;

I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my righteous labor.

(11) Then I looked upon all my works, so righteous and godly, Which my hands had wrought, and on the labor I achieved by my wisdom;

And behold, I perceived that all was but a troublesome and restless pursuit,

And there was no profit under the sun in that which I had so magnified.

(12) And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly:

For what can the man do that cometh after the king? Even that which hath been already done, bringing only self-scorn in his wake.

(13) Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly,
Far more than the rising dawn excelleth the deepest darkness of night.

(14) The wise man's eyes are in his head, while the fool walketh in perpetual darkness;

Yet I myself perceived also that one and the same event happeneth to them all without distinction.

(15) Then said I in my heart, "As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me, by fate designed?"

Why then was I so exceeding wise, subjecting myself to such exhaustion and decay?"

And I said to myself, that this also is but vanity and empty vexation.

(16) For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there shall be no remembrance for evermore;

Seeing that all shall be utterly forgotten in the days to come, passing away as mere turmoil,

And how unjust it is that the wise man and the fool must both

die in absolute futility.

(17) Therefore I hated life, because the grievous works
That are wrought under heaven appeared utterly evil unto me;
For all is but vanity, and fate itself is exceedingly cruel,
While life fleeth headlong, caught between bread and
spectacles.

(18) Yea, I hated all my labor which I had taken under heaven,
Because I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

(19) And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a
fool? How absurd,

Yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored,
without working even a single day.

All is vanity, and nothing more. (20) Therefore I went about
to cause my heart to despair

Of all the labor which I had taken under heaven, having fully
mastered my craft.

(21) For there is a man whose labor is in wisdom, and in
knowledge, and in equity;

Yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it for
his portion — this is unjust and evil!

(22) For what hath a man of all his labor, to bring him any
relief?

And of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath labored under the sun?

Is it all mere turmoil?

(23) For all his days are sorrows, and his travail, at times, is nothing but grief;

Yea, even in the night season his heart taketh not rest. This also is vanity and empty pursuit.

(24) There is no greater good for a man, than that he should eat to his fill, and have the power to drink,

And that his soul should make merry and delight in his labor thereafter.

This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God, who holdeth the thread of every man's fate.

(25) For who could eat, and who could find enjoyment any better than I?

(26) For God giveth to a man that is good in His sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy;

But to the sinner He giveth travail, to gather, and to heap up, and to collect,

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