THE LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE
FOR THE DATE OF "ECCLESIASTES"

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PREFACE

One of the most generally accepted results of O.T. criticism, even in Conservative scholarly circles, is the spuriousness of the Book of Ecclesiastes as a work of Solomon. Nearly all authorities acknowledge that it purports to be composed by the son and successor of King David, since it so affirms in its opening verse; yet even such Evangelicals as Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Leupold and E. J. Young feel that the weight of the evidence precludes taking this statement at face value. On the contrary they feel compelled to classify it as a sort of historical fiction, composed by a much later author upon the theme of Solomon's experiences and insights, and yet reflecting conditions and issues pertaining to a much later age, such as the 5th century B.C. Liberal scholars tend to place it in the Greek period, ranging all the way from 3rd century to the time of Herod the Great. Franz Delitzsch went so far as to state: "If *Koheleth* was written in Solomon's day, a history of the Hebrew language is impossible." Robert Gordis ("Koheleth, the Man and His World" Schocken, 1951, 1955, 1968) goes so far as to declare: "The view that Solomon is the author has been universally abandoned today, with the growth of a truer recognition of the style, vocabulary and world-outlook of Koheleth" (p. 5). It might appear that the last word had been spoken on this subject; surely this is one of the surest results of modern scholarship.

Such sentiments as these, however, represent an overstatement of the facts. It is not true that the Solomonic authorship of *Ecclesiastes* has been universally abandoned, at least in some Conservative circles. Aside from the theological problems arising from the denial of the genuineness of even one book of the Bible, there are very solid linguistic grounds for rejecting the verdict of spuriousness. This evidence is abundantly available even from the writings of some scholars who reject Solomonic authorship, but who are not entirely satisfied with the way the linguistic data have been handled. Thus James Muilenberg in BASOR 135 states in the course of a discussion of the 2nd cent. B.C. fragment of *Eccles.* from Qumran Cave 4 (p. 135): "Linguistically the book is unique. There is no question that its language has many striking perculiarities; these have been explained by some to be Late Hebrew (discussed by Margoliouth and Gordis) for which the language of the Mishnah is said to offer more than adequate support (a contention more than effectively answered by Margoliouth in the Jewish Encyclopedia V, 33, where he points out the

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linguistic affinities of *Qoheleth* with the Phoenician inscriptions, e.g., Eshmunazar, Tabnith). The Aramaic cast of the language has long been recognized, but only within recent years has its Aramaic provenance been claimed and supported in any detail (F. Zimmermann, C. C. Torrey, H. L. Ginsberg)..." He then goes on to mention with respect M. J. Dahood's discussion in *Biblica* 33 (1952), which will receive extended discussion in the course of this paper.

At the outset it should be observed that a comprehensive survey of all the linguistic data, including vocabulary, morphology, syntax and style, yields the result that the text of *Eccles*. fits into no known period in the history of the Heb. language. No significant affinities may be traced between this work and any of those canonical books which rationalist higher criticism has assigned to the Greek period (Daniel, Zechariah II, Joel, and portions of Deutero-Isaiah). So far as the early post-Exilic period is concerned, the Heb. of Eccles. is quite as dissimilar to that of Malachi, Nehemiah, Ezra and Esther as to any of the pre-Exilic books. This raises insuperable difficulties for the theory of Delitzsch and Young, who date it around 430 B.C., and of Beecher in the ISBE, who makes it 400. If *Eccles*. really came from the same period, how could there be such a total dissimilarity in vocabulary, syntax and style? Nor is the linguistic problem alleviated by moving the date up into the Greek or Intertestamental period. There are absolutely no affinities between the language of *Eccles*. and that of the Qumran sectarian literature. An actual comparison of this text with the Hebrew of the Talmud and the Midrash shows fully as great a dissimilarity as to any book in the O.T. canon. No truly objective or scientific examination of these linguistic data can come out to any other result than that present evidence fails to establish the contemporaneity of Ecclesiastes with any period whatever in the history of Hebrew literature, on the basis of the documents now extant. Anyone who affirms otherwise is the victim of his own subjective bias, carried along by a preconceived theory based upon non-linguistic factors.

It is the conviction of this writer that every such non-linguistic factor may be succesfully dealt with on the basis of Solomonic authorship. He is prepared to demonstrate that the incidental allusions to the contemporary scene reflect conditions known to obtain only during the reign of Solomon and at no other time. Admittedly no other historical figure enjoyed the unlimited wealth and power implied by the author's testimony as to his personal search for the *summum bonum* in life. His reputation for wisdom was unrivaled (1:16); his wealth surpassed that of all of his contemporaries (2:8); he was surrounded with a large retinue of servants (2:7). He enjoyed unequaled opportunities for carnal pleasure (2:3) and for extensive building operations (2:4-6). No other descendant of David ever measured up to these specifications. The book lacks any hint or suggestion that the Hebrew realm has ever been divided up into two rival kingdoms, even though the personal misfortunes and trials to which individual men are liable receive frequent mention.

Nevertheless the purpose of this paper will be to examine the linguistic factors and those alone, since they are most generally relied upon by rationalistic critics as the primary proof of the spuriousness of this remarkable work. Chief attention will be given to the findings of M. J. Dahood, entitled "Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth" (*Biblica* 33 (1952), pp. 30-52, 191-221). These findings are all the more remarkable because they proceed from the pen of what would be termed in a court of law as a "hostile witness"; for Dahood has no intention or desire to demonstrate the Solomonic authorship of *Ecclesiastes*. His personal preference is for a 4th century date, or thereabouts. Nevertheless the evidence he uncovers opens up a flood of light upon the literary background of the genre to which *Ecclesiastes* belongs, that of the philosophic discourse. In recent decades our knowledge of the Canaanite cultural sphere in which Israel had its literary development has tremendously enlarged beyond the days of Hengstenberg and Delitzsch. Lidzbarski's collection of the principal Phoenician and Punic inscriptions in his *Ephemeris*, the monumental *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* ("CIS"), and the rich literature from Ras Shamra have completely altered the picture from what it was back in the 19th century, when learned savants could indulge in all kinds of unfettered conjectures on the basis of the scholarly ignorance which then prevailed. An increasing amount of data is now available from all over the ancient Near East relative to the differing styles and peculiarities appearing in the various genres in which the documents exhumed by archeologists are now to be classified. Modern discovery makes completely justifiable the position that the ancient Semitic cultures cultivated differing styles and choices of vocabulary according to the conventions of each genre such as demonstrably obtained in the ancient Hellenic culture.

In the case of Greek literature, where we have much more literary data than we do from the Near East, we find that once a genre was developed in a particular locale or city-state, the dialect and vocabulary type of the original perfecters of this genre became standard for all who would compose in it from that time on, regardless of what idiom and style prevailed in his own area. Thus, since it was Homer who first brought the epic to its classical perfection and did so in the Old Ionic dialect (with some admixtures of other dialects spoken in his locality), it became the convention from then on for all composers of epics to employ his Old Ionic, regardless of what their own native tongue might be. But it was among the Dorian Greeks that choral poetry was first developed, and so all choral poetry from then on had to be composed in Doric, even in the midst of Attic dramas. As for lyric love poetry, because of the genius of Sappho and Alcaeus, who were natives of Lesbos and who brought this genre to perfection, it became almost obligatory for other composers of erotic verse to employ their Aeolic dialect. Correspondingly there is observable a very different idiom and style in Akkadian contract-tablets from that observable in legal codes; the historical annals likewise differed quite markedly from epic poetry. Especially in the case

of genres cultivated by the non-Semitic Sumerians, who exerted such a decisive influence upon the Akkadian speaking peoples, traits of style and turns of expression were used in the Akkadian productions which closely tied in with their Sumerian models.

It is clear that *Ecclesiastes* belonged to a special genre just as distinct as the Psalm or the Historical Narrative or the Levitical Code. It therefore had a distinct literary tradition behind it, derived from that segment of Canaanite culture which first developed it as a literary form. This was the genre of the philosophical treatise, a type of literature with which a genius of wide-ranging interests like Solomon would undoubtedly have encountered in Phoenician circles. During his reign there were close commercial and political relations with King Hiram of Tyre, and Solomon's keen interest in literature and wisdom would naturally incline him in this direction. As a careful observer of literary form and tradition, it is only to be expected that he preserved a distinct style and vocabulary for a love poem like *Canticles* and a collection of apothegms like *Proverbs*. This variety of treatment and style is no more striking than that observable in the later prophets, such as Hosea and Isaiah, when they shifted from oratorical prose to emotionally charged poetry, with its omission of the definite article and its adoption of parallelistic structure.

From this perspective let us examine some of the salient features of Dahood's article and observe what a strong case he has made out for Phoenician influence in this remarkable Hebrew masterpiece. In the first place he points out that the late Prof. Margoliouth of Oxford was one of the first to rebut the arguments of scholars who had been stressing what they felt to be Aramaic or Mishnaic traits in the language of *Ecclesiastes*. In his article in the Jewish Encyclopedia he pointed to the frequency of the participial present, the unintelligibility of certain phrases which are apparently not garbled in transmission, the lack of sharpness in some of the aphorisms, the complete omission of the name Yahweh, and the utter lack of reference to distinctively Jewish matters. From all of this he drew the inference that this was a sort of foreign Hebrew, betraying an earlier composition than is usually assumed. Because the newer Hebrew words like *'ēseq* ("business"), *shemma* ("lest"), *hirshah* ("authorize") are not found in this book at all, but only the older terms for each of these (*ḥepēṣ lammah* and *hishlīṭ*), some of which are found in Phoenician inscriptions, therefore we must place the work earlier than 250 B.C. (Dahood, op cit., pp. 30-31.)

It is Dahood's own conviction that "the Book of Ecclesiastes was originally composed by an author who wrote in Hebrew but who employed Phoenician orthography, and whose composition shows heavy Canaanite-Phoenician influence" (op. cit., p. 32). This position does not rule out the presence of some Aramaic coloring in syntax and vocabulary, for as R. A. Bowman pointed out in JNES 7 (1948), p. 71, "It is probable that many of the grammatical peculiarities encountered in the writings from Northern Palestine are due to the influence of Aramaic in use in

that region." Since the territories of Damascus were just over the border
from the tribal areas of Dan, Asher and Transjordanian Manasseh, this
was all but inevitable.

Nor does this Phoenician hypothesis conflict with the apparent simi-
larities with Mishnaic Hebrew which some authorities have stressed, for
the simple reason that Phoenician itself developed some traits which
happened to arise also in Mishnaic Hebrew, in contradistinction to the
classical Hebrew of the O.T. Such traits would include the use of the
demonstrative pronominal adjective without the article, as well as the
employment of words like *mazal* ("fortune") and *pas* ("tablet" or
"board"). It is also noteworthy that *Proverbs*, which H. L. Ginsberg has
labeled as Phoenicizing, contains a number of similarities in language
and thought to the Aramaic *Wisdom of Ahiqar*, for Biblical Wisdom was
evidently subjected to influences from Israel's neighbors. It therefore
tended to incorporate the best of the practical wisdom that had been
accumulated over the centuries of Near Eastern civilization (cf. H. L.
Ginsberg, "The Legend of King Keret" ASOR Supplementary Studies
2-3, New Haven 1943, p. 33). Dahood states (p. 34): "The Wisdom
Books of the Bible, *Job* and *Proverbs*, are heavily saturated with Canaan-
ite words and forms, as is being recognized more and more widely."

Dahood then proceeds to marshal his proofs under four main cate-
gories: 1) Phoenician orthography; 2) Phoenician inflections, pronouns
and particles; 3) Phoenician syntax; and 4) Phoenician lexical borrowings
or analogies. Taken cumulatively these data appear to establish an irrefut-
able case for the Phoenician background of the genre to which *Qoheleth*
belongs.

I. PHOENICIAN ORTHOGRAPHY

Dahood insists that the evidence of the Massoretic Text itself, and
of the readings of other Hebrew manuscripts and ancient Versions, point
unmistakably to original composition in a type of orthography completely
lacking in vowel letters; that is, the kind of spelling which prevailed in
Phoenician inscriptions long after the introduction of vowel letters (or
matres lectionis) in Aramaic and Hebrew. To be sure, the earlier Hebrew
spelling likewise seems to have omitted vowel letters, if the Gezer Calen-
dar (written near the end of Solomon's reign) is a reliable criterion.
Dahood does not discuss this point, but the first clear evidence we have
for final *matres lectionis* (such as -h for -ā, -' for -ā, -w for -ō, -y for -ī
or -ē) is in the late 8th century, with medial vowel letters coming into
vogue at the end of the 7th century or early 6th century. Robert Gordis
("Koheleth: the Man and His World," Schocken, 1955, 1968, p. 416)
points to this fact, and suggests that "This defective orthography...
originally basic to Hebrew, was modified, under the stress of need,
sporadically and irregularly by each scribe, who added *matres lectionis*
at will.... To argue from real or alleged defective spelling in the MT
of Koheleth for a Phoenician provenance of the book is completely un-

justified. As a matter of fact, many of the instances of variants in the Hebrew manuscripts, as well as the alleged divergencies in the Versions ...are not orthographic at all, but are syntactic in character."

This argument of Gordis's overlooks the decisive consideration that works composed in Exilic or post-Exilic times could not have been written without vowel letters at any stage of their transmission. Since medial *matres lectionis* had already come into use by the time of Jeremiah and the Lachish Ostraca, no document composed in Hebrew by that time could have existed in the earlier orthography. No scribe ever dropped vowel letters as a matter of policy when copying out an original which had them, even though he may have inserted them when transcribing a *Vorlage* which lacked them. It inevitably follows that *Ecclesiastes* was composed long before the age of Nehemiah and Malachi to which Delitzsch, Young and Leupold assigned it. Dahood comments (pp. 35-36): "The medial *matres lectionis* were introduced into Biblical Hebrew about the 6th century B.C. under Aramaic influence, and the use of them became more and more abundant with the passing of centuries, until by the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating from the second and first centuries B.C. vowel letters were often employed to represent even short vowels. Accordingly any work which was composed in the normal Hebrew orthography of the third and fourth centuries B.C. would have been amply supplied with final and internal *matres lectionis*.... An examination of the variant readings reveals that they are mostly of the type that would arise from the editing or copying of an original text which lacked all vowel letters." We follow with a selection of some of the clearest examples which Dahood adduces, setting aside those which depend upon a questionable textual emendation or alteration incapable of convincing proof.

1) Eccl. 1:13 reads k-l '-š-r n-'-š-h according to MT, but k-l '-š-r n-'-s-w according to two manuscripts of the Septuagint (LXX), and the Latin Vulgate. Such confusion might well have arisen from an original spelling n-'-s (which could have been vocalized as na'ᵃsaʰ or na'ᵃsū, i.e., "was made" or "were made"). 2) Similarly in Eccl. 1:16 the MT reads k-l '-š-r h-y-h ("all that which came into being"), whereas LXX, Syriac and Vulgate read k-'-š-r h-y-w ("according to those things which came into being"). In Phoenician spelling both *hāyāʰ* and *hāyū* would have been written h-y. The same situation arises with Eccl. 2:7, where MT reads w-b-n-y b-y-t h-y-h l-y ("and sons of the household was to me"), and the LXX and Syriac imply: w-b-n-y b-y-t h-y-w l-y ("and there were sons of the household to me"). The subject is personal and precedes the verb—which even in Arabic would demand a plural verb in this situation. Evidently the earliest text read simply h-y, and was vocalized as *hāyāʰ* by some scribes and *hāyū* by others. (Dahood adduces several other examples in which this same verb *hāyā* is involved.) 3) In Eccl. 4:10 there is a similar choice between a singular and a plural verb form. MT and most of the Versions read k-y '-m y-p-l-w ("for if

they fall"), but the Syriac, Targum and Vulgate imply k-y '-m y-p-l ("for if one falls").

4) Eccl. 3:16 reads in MT: m-q-w-m h-ṣ-d-q š-m-h ("the place of righteousness there"), but a few Heb. MSS, the Vaticanus MS of the LXX and the Targum imply: m-y-w-m h-ṣ-d-y-q ("the place of the righteous man")—which would be a perfectly justifiable vocalization of a Phoenician-type spelling: h-ṣ-d-q.

5) Eccl. 5:3 appears as: '-t '-š-r t-d-r ("that which you vow") in MT and Theodotion. But Aquila, LXX, Peshitta (Syriac) imply: '-t-h '-š-r t-d-r ("you who vow"). Both *'ēt* (the sign of the direct object) and *'attāh* would appear as '-t in the most ancient spelling. Not that one such '-t is pointed as 'atta (without final -h) even in the MT, at Eccl. 7:22.

6) Eccl. 9:1 appears as: w-l-b-w-r '-t-k-l z-m ("and to investigate all this") in MT, whereas LXX and Syriac imply: w-l-b-y r-'-h '-t k-l z-h ("and my heart beholds all this"). Even Delitzsch felt that this discrepancy pointed back to an original w-l-b-r-'-t-k-l-z, which would be pure "Phoenician" spelling.

7) Eccl. 10:1 reads: z-b-w-b-y m-w-t y-b-'-y-š ("the flies of death smells") in MT. But this plur. subject demands a plur. verb, and therefore we should understand a singular: z-b-w-b m-t ("a dead fly"), argues Dahood, pointing out that either reading (*zᵉbūbē māwet* or *zᵉbūb mēt*) would go back to a z-b-b m-t.

II. Phoenician Inflections, Pronouns and Participles

The fem. absolute ending in Phoenician normally was -t (-at), rather than the -h (-a) which was used in Hebrew. But note in *Qohelet* the forms n-h-t (4:6; 6:5; 9:17) for "a rest, relief" (rather than nuha), and m-t-t (mattat) rather than m-t-n-h (mattanah) for "gift." Note also that this same m-t-t is found in a seventh cent. Phoenician inscription from Ur (Dahood, p. 46).

Note that Phoenician prepositions often have a fem. -t ending alongside the more typical form which lacks the -t. For example, note Eccl. 3:18 with its compound preposition '-l d-b-r-t ("because, for the sake of"), usually explained as an Aramaic borrowing, has perfect warrant in the Phoenician '-l-t as an alternative form for '-l ("upon") and p-n-t alongside l-p-n ("in front of"). Note also that Koheleth uses -m-t in 5:14 ("agreeing with, corresponding to") and l- -m-t in 7:14 with the same meaning.

A distinctively early conditional participle, '-l-w ("if") appears in Eccl. 6:6, and is found elsewhere only in Est. 7:4. Many authorities have regarded this as a reflection of Aramaic, Syriac and Mishnaic Hebrew '-l-', but this overlooks that the word appears in the earliest long inscription extant in Phoenician, the eleventh century Ahiram Inscription (spelled '-l).

Very noteworthy is the frequent relative pronoun (or particle) *she* ("who, which, that"), which occurs 67 times, alongside the classical Hebrew *'asher* (which occurs 89 times). Dahood reminds us that S. R. Driver, Brockelmann and Bauer-Leander pointed out *she* as a North Israelite element, and it is undoubtedly the same as Phoenician '-š ("who, what"). This would not sound strange in a genre originally cultivated in Phoenicia, even though *she* is rare in classical Hebrew. In this connection note the related m-h-š ("whatever," "anything") in Eccl. 1:9; 3:15, 22; 8:7; 10:14; and observe that it occurs in the spelling m-'-š in the ninth century Kilamuwa Inscription. Lidzbarski identifies this with m-h-š in *Qohelet* (Ephemeris III, 227).

As for the interrogative pronouns *mī* ("who/") and *māh* ("what?"), Dahood finds four passages (1:9; 3:15; 5:9; 9:4) where they are used as indefinites, "whoever" or "whatever." The ratio of these in Eccles. is higher than in any other O.T. book, and Siegfried and Hertzberg have tried to explain these in *Qohelet* as an evidence of the lateness of the language. Yet this explanation is rendered more than dubious by the appearance of this usage (*mī* five times and *māh* once) in the ninth century Phoenician inscription of Kilamuwa. Likewise the fourth century B.C. inscription of Tabnit at Sidon employs m-y in the sense of "whoever."

In regard to the sporadic use of the definite article *ha-*, advocates of the theory of an Aramaic original have attempted to account for this by the supposition that the text from which *Eccles.* was translated represented such a late stage of Aramaic that the emphatic state (which involves the addition of a long -a to nouns) had already lost its distinctive function as an indicator of definiteness and was used even for indefinite nouns, as in Syriac. Although Dahood does not mention this, the explanation thus offered runs afoul of the fact that there is absolutely no evidence for such an inexact use of the emphatic -a in pre-Christian Aramaic. The *Genesis Apocryphon* from the first century B.C. still observes the definite function of the emphatic just as faithfully as in *Daniel* or *Ezra*. This leaves the irregular use of the definite article in *Qohelet* (the earliest manuscript fragments of which date from the second century B.C.) completely unaccounted for by the theory of an Aramaic original.

But the theory of a Phoenician provenance of the philosophical-discourse genre furnishes a perfectly satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon. Dahood suggests (op cit., p. 198): "Instead of supposing that the translator, who presumably knew both Aramaic and Hebrew, made an enormous number of blunders, it is much more reasonable to infer, especially in view of all the other proofs at hand, that the author was influenced by his habitual use of a dialect which had no fixed rule concerning the use or non-use of the article with common nouns introduced by '-y-t. Such a branch of N. W. Semitic was Phoenician." Examples of *'et* preceding a noun without the definite article are found in: Eccl. 3:15 (*'et nirdaf*—"that which has passed"); 4:4 (*'et-kol-'āmāl*

and *'et kol-kishrōn*—"all the labor" and "all the skilful work"); 7:7 (*'et-lēb*); 8:9 (*'et-kol-ze^h*); 12:14 (*'et-kol-ma 'se^h*). Phoenician examples of this same tendency are: Karatepe III:14:15 (y-ḥ-m-d '-y-t h-q-r-tz— "shall desire this citadel"); CIS 3:4 (p-'-l '-y-t h-m-ṭ-b-ḥ-z—"made this slaughtering-place"—instances where *ha-* is used before the noun even though not before the demonstrative itself—side by side with no definite article after '-y-t; CIS 3:4 ('l y-p-t-ḥ '-y-t m-s-k-m z—"let him not open this tomb"); CIS 3:10-11 (y-s-' '-y-t h-l-t z—"takes this sarcophagus away"); CIS 95:4 (y-q-d-š '-t m-z-b-ḥ—"sanctifies the altar"); Lidzb. 52:4 ('-y-t r-'-t z l-k-t-b—"to write down this decision"); CIS 3784:1-2 (l-g-n-b t '-b-n z—"to steal away this stone"). Zellig Harris in his "Grammar of Phoenician," pp. 55-56, makes this comment: "Phoenician has the same article h- as in Hebrew, but uses it much more rarely. Its use, though sparing in the Iaḥimilk inscription from Byblos...shows that it was at all events known to early Phoenician. It occurs more frequently in later inscriptions, particularly in those from Sidon. Its use is quite irregular; it was palpably not a basic feature of the language."

Examples in *Qohelet* of the lack of an article before an adjective modifying a definite noun include: 6:8 (*ma^h le'ani yōwdēa' lah^{a}lōk* —"What does a poor man have who knows how to walk"); 10:6 (*bamm^{e}rōwmīm rabbīm*—"in great dignity." "The Phoenician theory," says Dahood (p. 199), "offers a very plausible solution to the difficulty. In the Byblos inscription of Yehimilk from the tenth century B.C. the attributive adjective lacks the article where Hebrew syntax would require it (cf. W. F. Albright: JAOS 67, 1947, p. 156)." Similarly also, in the Karatepe inscription there is a series of three nouns, the first two of which have the article, while the third mysteriously lacks it. This construction is very similar to Eccl. 12:4 and 12:6. To be sure, Delitzsch and Barton have pointed to the practice in the Mishnah of omitting the article, "but," says Dahood, "it is much more probable that Phoenician syntactic permeation is responsible for this usage in *Qohelet*."

One more particle calls for discussion, the conjunction l-m, meaning "lest." In CIS 3:21 we find l-m introducing a negative purpose clause; so also in Eccles. 5:5; 7:16-17, where both LXX and Jerome translate "in order that...not" or "lest perchance." Thus 5:5 should be rendered: "Do not allow thy mouth to cause they flesh to sin, *lest* (rather than "wherefore"? as indicated by MT's *lamma*) God should be angry at thy voice." Similarly 7:7: "Do not be over-wicked nor play the fool, *lest* (not: "why should?") you die before your time."

III. PHOENICIAN SYNTAX

In the twelve chapters of *Ecclesiastes* there are four or five examples of a rare construction, scarcely found elsewhere in the O.T., namely the infinite absolute accompanied by an independent personal pronoun as subject. The citations are: 4:2; 4:17; 8:9; 9:11; and possibly (by dint of a plausible emendation from piel perf. to piel inf. absol.) 9:15. Thus in

4:2 we meet with $w^e\check{s}abb\bar{e}^a\dot{h}$ $'^an\bar{i}$, "and I praised." "In view of the Amarna and Phoenician evidence," says Dahood p. 49), "it is no longer necessary to explain š-b-ḥ as a shortened piel participle, and the emendation to šibbaḥti (perf. 1st comm. sing.) is also to be rejected (cf. W. L. Moran, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, 4, 1950, 169-172, and the evidence collected from the Byblos letters in the Tell-Amarna correspondence; there can no longer be any reasonable doubt about the nature of the qtl/yqtl 'nk construction in the Karatepe inscriptions)." He goes on to suggest that the infinitive absolute is often used in this work in place of the classical imperfect conversive, and then remarks: "This penchant for the infinitive absolute may be ascribed to Phoenician syntactical influence rather than to mere 'lateness' of the language, because none of the other late books of the Bible evinces such a marked tendency." (Gordis rejects Dahood's classification of $nah^ap\bar{o}^{w}k$ in Esth. 9:1 as a niphal infin. absol., even though it is so spelled in the MT, but claims that there are authentic examples of this construction in Lev. 6:7 and Deut. 13:2. However, neither of these last two citations contains such infinitives in the MT, and so Dahood is probably correct in affirming that only Esth. 9:1 shows this construction in the O.T. apart from its occurrences in *Qohelet*.) Dahood concludes: "Although there is not as yet clear evidence in the Phoenician inscriptions for the infinitive absolute with the personal pronoun of the third person, there is clear evidence for this usage in the Amarna Letters, as first pointed out by W. L. Moran (op. cit., p. 171). To cite but one example: EA 113:40-42, pa-ta-ri-ma su-ut—'if he leaves'." The fact that this construction existed in fourteenth century Canaanite syntax certainly counts in favor of a Solomonic date for *Ecclesiastes*, even though no examples were discoverable in the later Phoenician inscriptions.

One of the syntactical traits of *Eccles.* which has often been adduced as proof for a late date of composition is the use of the independent personal pronoun as a copular verb, a construction which occurs now and then in the Psalms and Prophets, but which becomes increasingly frequent in later Hebrew and in Biblical Aramaic. It has been assumed that such a usage would be impossible for the tenth century B.C. Examples of this construction in *Qohelet* are: 3:13 (*mattat '$^el\bar{o}h\bar{i}m$ $h\bar{i}^{\flat}$*—"it is a gift of God"); 4:8 (*$w^e'iny\bar{a}n$ $r\bar{a}^{\flat}$ $h\bar{u}^{\flat}$*—"and it is a sore travail"). Other citations are: 1:17; 2:23; 5:18 and 6:2. But Dahood's research demonstrates the fact that this use of the pronoun is also indigenous to Phoenician. The fifth century inscription of Yehawmilk states that he was a righteous king: k-m-l-k s-d-q h-' (h-' here being the equivalent of Hebrew hu,). Examples occur in *Eccles.* where the pronoun functions as a copular after a relative pronoun. For example: *hahayyim '$^a\check{s}er$ hēmmā ḥayyīm*—"the living who are alive" (4:2); *$h\bar{i}^{\flat}i\check{s}\check{s}a^h$ '$a\check{s}er$ $h\bar{i}^{\flat}$ $m^es\bar{o}d\bar{i}m$ libbāh*—"the woman whose heart is snares." Compare with these CIS 93:1-2: b-š-n-t ...h-' s-t; Lidzd. 36:4 b-š-n-t '-š h-m-t l-'-m—"during the years which the people had" (h-m-t being equivalent to Heb. hēmmā); and Nora 2f.: š-h-' b-s-r-d-n—"which is in Sardinia." Such a widespread use of the copular pronoun throughout the Phoenician-speaking world may well

point to an early origin from pre-Exilic times, although the paucity of extant documentation furnishes an insufficient foundation for dogmatic assertion on this point.

IV. PHOENICIAN LEXICAL BORROWINGS AND ANALOGIES

"Lexically," says Dahood (p. 201), "the Book of Ecclesiastes stands alone in the O.T. This uniqueness has long been recognized and has occasioned a number of thorough and accurate lexicographical analyses by competent philologians, as Friedrich Delitzsch, Siegfried and Pode-chard, so that now any further study along these lines might seem super-fluous." He then goes on to remark that of the 29 alleged Aramaisms claimed by E. Kautzsch ("Die Aramaismen im A.T." 1902) a good dozen can be shown to be no direct Aramaic borrowings at all, "but are derived from the rich Canaanite-Phoenician vocabulary in use along the eastern Mediterranean seaboard" (p. 202). A few examples of distinctively Phoenician usage will suffice for the purposes of this paper.

(1) *'ādām*, normally the more generic term for the human race or for the population of a locality, turns out to be the predominant word for "man" (49 times) rather than *'īsh*, which occurs only seven times. This amounts to a seven to one ratio of preference which cannot be exampled in any other book in the O.T. In some instances *'ādām* is used even where an individual man is intended (e.g., 2:18, 21). In the ninth century Phoenician Azitawadd Inscription '-d-m is used five times and '-š only once. Note further that the Phoenician inscriptions usually employed '-š only in compound expressions, and this is precisely the situation in *Qohelet* as well, in phrases like: *'īš nokri* ("a man who is a stranger") in 6:2; *mē'īš šōmēa'* ("from a man who hears," i.e., an auditor) in 7:5; *'īš miškēn* ("a man who is poor," i.e., a pauper) in 9:15; and the plural *'an-šē   haḥayil* ("the men of strength"). Here again, then, a notable similarity to early Phoenician usage presents itself.

(2) The key phrase *taḥat haššemeš* ("under the sun") occurs twenty-seven times in *Ecclesiastes,* where it indicates that the author's perspective is that of this present, earthly life only, as distinct from the life beyond and the heavenly realm above. In all of ancient Northwest Semitic literature thus far discovered this rather obvious phrase occurs only in Phoenician, that is, the inscriptions óf Tabnit and Eshmunazar of Sidon.

(3) The term *re'ût* (a striving, a desire") occurs seven times in *Qohelet,* but nowhere else in the O.T. Because of the *-ût* ending some critics have been quick to label this as an Aramaism, and of course it does occur in post-Biblical Aramaic. Yet the word also occurs in Punic inscriptions at least twice with the legislative connotation of "decree, decision," or in the more general meaning of "pleasure, good will." Zellig Harris in his *Grammar of Phoenician* (1936), p. 147, suggests that this may have been a loan-word from Aramaic. Whether the borrowing was from Aramaic into Phoenician or from Phoenician into Aramaic, at least there is good

ground for supposing that the author of *Eccles.* could have borrowed the word from Phoenician, rather than directly from Aramaic.

(4) The word *kišrōn* ("skill, success, profit") occurs three times, and its related verb twice in *Qohelet.* Otherwise it appears in the O.T. only twice: Ps. 68:7 and Es. 8:5. Kautzsch felt sure this was an Aramaism, but the Ras Shamra tablets indicate that this root was already current as k-t-r, especially in the name of a certain deity (vocalized by Gordon as *Kothar*), but also as a fem. plur. participle: "the female jubilantes" (e.g. Text 77:5-6). The Arabic *kautharun* was a copious fountain in Paradise. It should be noted that if the second radical was originally *th*, then the word should have been k-t-r in Aramaic rather than k-š-r. But since Ugaritic *th* early became Phoenician *sh*, it is legitimate to infer that the word was borrowed from Phoenician into Aramaic rather than being an indigenous Aramaic word.

(5) In Eccles. 10:18 we read: "By slothfulness the roof *sinks in* (*yimmak*), and through idleness of hands the house *leaks* (*yidlōp*)". Kautzsch labeled the first verb, *makak*, an Aramaism (so also Podechard and Barton). "How erroneous this was," says Dahood (p. 212), "is now evident from the Ugaritic text 68:17, where the same pair of verbs y-m-k and y-d-l-p stand in parallelism. Even Ginsberg has admitted that 'there is indeed one passage in *Koheleth* which perhaps should be compared with a Canaanite passage, namely Koh. 10:18 (mkk // dlp) with III AB A:17 (JAOS 70, 1950, pp. 158-159)." It should be noted that this is the only place in the O.T. where these two rare verbs occur together. The author seems to have employed an old Canaanite poetic cliché.

(6) In Eccles. 11:2 appears the climactic series "seven . . . eight," which never occurs elsewhere in the O.T. except in Mi. 5:4. But it is highly significant that "seven...eight" appears at least six times in the Ugaritic literature, and once in the Phoenician incantation from Arslan Tash (BASOR 76, 1939, 5-11).

(7) The word *šûq* ("street") in 12:4 has always been confidently claimed as an Aramaism by the late-date theorists. (Note that it appears in two other purportedly Solomonic passages: Prov. 7:8 and Cant. 3:2.) It is cognate with the well-known Arabic *šûq* ("market street, bazaar"), which could not have been borrowed either from Canaanite or from Aramaic in view of the first radical (*sin* rather than *shin*). Hence it was doubtless a pan-Semitic term of great antiquity; even Akkadian has a *šuqaqu* meaning "lane" (KB 957). But it is significant that there was in North Africa a Phoenician settlement called Zuchis or Souchis by Strabo, and the name of the town actually appears on coins as š-w-q. It seems that this was the Punic equivalent of the Roman term *forum*.

(8) An expression occurs in Eccles. 10:1 which is unique in the Hebrew Bible: *šemen rōqēaḥ* meaning *"perfumer's oil."* The identical phrase occurs as š-m-n r-q-h in Ugaritic (Text 120:5), and with the same mean-

ing. In Phoenician and Punic inscriptions the professional term r-q-ḥ, "perfumer" occurs at least five times. It is unknown in Aramaic, although it does appear in Akkadian as *ruqqu* "compound ointment."

(9) Dahood concludes with an impressive list of mercantile terms appearing in *Ecclesiastes*, remarking (p. 220): "The distinctively commercial character of many of the key words and phrases is thoroughly consonant with what is known about the commercializing Phoenician culture. The repeated use of words denoting profit and loss, abundance and deficiency, shares and wages, ownership and wealth, patrimony and poverty, betrays a milieu very harmonizing with the mercantile character of Phoenicia and her colonies." He then cites such terms as the following: (a) *'amal*, "gain, earning" (12 times); (b) *yitrōn*, "gain, advantage" (18 times); (c) *'inyān*, "occupation, business" (6 times); (d) *yasap*, "add, collect" (5 times); (e) *ḥesrōn*, "lack, deficit" (6 times); (f) *mispār* in the sense of "small number" (4 times); (g) *ḥēleq*, "share, portion" (7 times); (h) *kisrōn*, "success, advantage" (5 times); (i) *'ośer*, "riches" (12 times); (j) *ḥesbōn*, "computation" (5 times); and (k) *sākār*, "wages" (twice). These and the many other examples which he cites amply demonstrate the commercialistic background for this genre, which is most obviously accounted for by the theory of Phoenician provenance. Although Dahood does not discuss this, it might also be observed that the reign of Solomon was apparently marked by more extensive trade relations than at any other time in pre-Christian Jewish history. Israel at that time acted as middleman for trade between Egypt and Asia Minor, and shared in the import business from Africa and India. It would have been only natural for Solomon, if he was indeed the author, to have found such words widely current in the speech of his day, and to have used them as convenient symbols for communicating his philosophic message.

V. Unsuccessful Rebuttal Against the Phoenician Theory

Earlier in this paper (pp. 7-8) mention has been made of Robert Gordis' attack against Dahood's position in the matter of Phoenician orthography. This rebuttal first came out in his 1954 discussion ("Was Koheleth a Phoenician?"), and was reiterated as an appendix to his "Koheleth: the Man and His World: A Study of Ecclesiastes" (Schocken reprint 1968; first edition 1951). H. L. Ginsberg at the same time came out with a rather sarcastic essay entitled "The Romance of Koheleth the Canaanite." These emphatic rejections show more strength of personal conviction than of scholarly reasoning. The fact of the matter is that the formidable mass of concrete evidence gathered by Dr. Dahood is virtually beyond refutation.

A few examples will suffice to show the weakness of Gordis' attack, as he has capsulated it in his appendix above cited. As has already been pointed out (p. 8), Gordis' argument that much or most of the Hebrew Scriptures were composed in consonantal orthography lacking vowel-letters completely fails to cope with the problem of post-Exilic orthog-

raphy, which abounded in vowel letters. This factor alone excludes the possibility of dating *Ecclesiastes* either in the fifth century (as Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Young and Leupold maintained) or in any later age. Dahood's evidence is completely decisive for this point. The only counterevidence that Gordis can cite is a second century A.D. Jewish bill of sale in which a woman's name is once spelled š-l-m and once š-l-w-m. This proves absolutely nothing except that variations, involving the use or omission of vowel letters, continued in Hebrew spelling even in the Christian era. But this does nothing to refute the pattern of variants in the text of *Qohelet* most easily explained on the basis of original consonantal spellings.

Likewise ineffectual is the affirmation by Gordis (op. cit., p. 416) that other instances of non-syncopation of the definite article can be found outside of *Ecclesiastes* in the Hebrew Bible. Dahood never claimed that this phenomenon was unique to *Qohelet*, but only that it occurred much more frequently there than in any other book. The same observation pertains to Gordis' contention that the construction infinitive absolute plus independent pronoun occurs elsewhere in the Bible. As we have pointed out already, he can make out an infinitive absolute in Lev. 6:7 and Deut. 13:2 only by dint of altering the Massoretic vowel points. Such conjectural and debatable alteration hardly furnishes a strong basis for proof.

As for the other arguments which Gordis advances, not one of them has not already been taken account of by Dahood himself, and convincingly dealt with by him. Thus Gordis urges that the feminine demonstrative form *zōh* (rather than the normal Biblical *zōʾt*) appears six times in *Qohelet*, and that it is also the standard form in the Mishnah. But Dahood dealt fully with this in his essay (op cit., p. 37), indicating that *zōh* is regularly used as a fem. demonstrative in Phoenician also; therefore Gordis' supposed evidence is completely ineffectual to refute the Phoenician hypothesis. The same is true of the argument based on the relative *she*; while it may have become standard in Mishnaic Hebrew, it is also true that ʾ-š and even š were frequently used in Phoenician. Hence its use in *Qohelet* is no argument whatever against the Phoenician theory. All of the alleged Aramaisms cited by Gordis were thoroughly discussed by Dahood and shown to point equally well towards a Phoenician provenance. If this, then, is the ablest rebuttal that can be brought against the theory of a Phoenician background for *Ecclesiastes*, it is only reasonable to conclude that it stands confirmed and vindicated.

This observation, however, does not extend to the post-Exilic dating which Dahood suggests for the actual composition of *Qohelet*. There is not a shred of evidence for the gathering of any refugee colony of Jews in Phoenicia after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. It is doubtful whether a subject province of the Chaldean Empire (as Phoenicia was at this time), would have furnished asylum to foreign refugees from the wrath

of Nebuchadnezzar subsequent to the assassination of Gedaliah. Much of the data assembled by Dahood shows a close relationship to the Ugaritic literature of Moses' time, and so there is every reason to deduce from this the suitability of the language of *Ecclesiastes* to a genre cultivated among the Phoenician-speaking peoples and adopted from them by a gifted tenth century Hebrew author, composing in a dialect of Canaanite (namely, Hebrew) very closely related to Phoenician itself. This seems to be the most reasonable deduction to make in the light of the linguistic evidence presently at hand. No sound argument for the spuriousness of *Qohelet* as a work of Solomon's can be based upon its grammar, language or style.