

**THE WISDOM OF JESUS,  
THE SON OF SIRACH,  
OR, ECCLESIASTICUS**

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The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach, Or, Ecclesiasticus by Mary Wilder Tileston

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## PREFACE.

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THE book of Ecclesiasticus is supposed to have been written, or rather compiled, in Hebrew by a wise and learned Jew of Jerusalem, named Jesus, (or Joshua,) the son of Sirach, about 180 B.C. His grandson who bore the same name, having taken up his abode in Alexandria, translated the book into Greek about 130 B.C. for the instruction of his fellow-countrymen who were settled in that city.

It was much read and highly valued in the early Christian Church. Athanasius states that it was put into the hands of catechumens as a moral catechism. The following passage from John Bunyan's autobiography, "Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners," shows that the lapse of centuries has not weakened its adaptation to the wants of the human soul.

"For several days I was greatly assaulted and perplexed, and was often, when I had been walking, ready to sink where I went, with faintness in my mind; but one day, after I had been so many weeks oppressed and cast down therewith, as I was now quite giving up the ghost of all my



hopes of ever attaining life, that sentence fell with weight upon my spirit: 'Look at the generations of old, and see; did ever any trust in God and were confounded?' at which I was greatly enlightened and encouraged in my soul; for thus at that very instant it was expounded to me: 'Begin at the beginning of Genesis, and read to the end of the Revelation, and see if you can find that there was ever any that trusted in the Lord and was confounded.' So coming home, I presently went to my Bible, to see if I could find that saying, not doubting but to find it presently; for it was so fresh, and with such strength and comfort on my spirit, that it was as if it talked with me. Well, I looked, but found it not; only it abode upon me. Then did I ask first this good man and then another, if they knew where it was, but they knew no such place. At this I wondered that such a sentence should so suddenly, and with such comfort and strength, seize and abide upon my heart; and yet that none could find it (for I doubted not but that it was in the Holy Scriptures). Thus I continued above a year, and could not find the place; but at last, casting my eye upon the Apocryphal books, I found it in Ecclesiasticus ii. 10. This at the first did somewhat daunt me; but because by this time I had got more experience of the love and kindness of God, it troubled me the less, especially when I considered that though

it was not in those texts that we call holy and canonical; yet, forasmuch as this sentence was the sum and substance of many of the promises, it was my duty to take the comfort of it; and I bless God for that word, for it was of good to me; that word doth still oft-times shine before my face."

M. W. T.

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