

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

Epistles. We find the same anticipations overshadowing his earliest letters, those to the Thessalonians. In his Epistle to the Galatians he gave a sad list of the works of the flesh. In Philippians iii. 18-22 he saw the ways and the doom of the enemies of the cross of Christ. As he drew near his end, he prophesied the apparent triumph of evil, and we need not be surprised to find here in these last words a weird and sombre prevision of the hard and perilous times which would accompany the development and consummation of Messiah's kingdom.

H. R. REYNOLDS.

ECCLESIASTES.

CHAPTER II. VERSES 4-11.¹

HENGSTENBERG has remarked that the first two Verses of this Chapter form the germ of the Parable of the Rich Fool in Luke xii. 16-21. As here the soul is addressed, "delight thyself in pleasure" (look upon good), so there, *ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθά*: as here, "I will prove thee with joy," so there, *εὐφραίνου*: as here, "it is mad," so there, *ἄφρων*; Verse 12 and Verse 19 here having also their counterpart in the *ὃ δὲ ἡτοίμασας τὴν ἑσπέραν* there.

The parallel, indeed, applies, so far as it applies at all, to the whole of this section, and not merely to the first two Verses; but the future here is very different from the future of the parable. The sense of the "folly" here is awakened by the unsatisfying nature of earthly enjoyment; the "folly" there is only seen in the light of death and the judgment.

The passage that follows is, as Reuss has remarked, one of the most picturesque in the Book. It is Solo-

¹ The translation of these Verses will be found in the September number of THE EXPOSITOR.

mon's history sketched in bold outline. It is the tale of an Eastern despot, surrounding himself with all that absolute will and immense resources could command. The experiment is no longer the indulgence in sensual pleasures, though these were not wanting (*Verse 8*): it is the attempt to find satisfaction in vast undertakings, which furnished ample and constant occupation to a mind naturally active. Pleasure has palled upon him; he will occupy himself with schemes worthy of a monarch.

Verse 4.—*I engaged in great works* (literally, "I made great my works"—conceived and executed them on a grand scale). *I builded me houses*: one magnificent palace after another; his own palace, which was thirteen years in building; the palace of the forest of Lebanon, with its pillars, forty-five in number, fifteen in a row, and the hall of judgment for the throne; and the palace he built for Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings vii. 1-12); all of these rich in adornment of cedar and gold and ivory, and sumptuously embellished with the rare and costly work of Tyrian and other artists, whom Solomon had assembled at his court. His gardens and vineyards were not less famous than his palaces. Every page of Solomon's Song bears witness to his intense delight in nature, to his love of trees and flowers, to his keen appreciation of all their richness and variety of colour and perfume, and of the delicious freshness and luxuriant verdure of the forest solitudes of North Palestine; and we know that "he spake of all trees and plants, from the cedar which groweth in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." David had his vineyards, that formed part of the royal domain, and whence came the wine for the royal cellars (1 Chron. xxvii. 27); but Solomon planted

more ; and he laid out spacious gardens and parks,¹ or pleasaunces ; and he stocked his orchards with every variety of fruit-tree, and he spared no pains upon their cultivation. With this end he constructed tanks and reservoirs, and had an elaborate system of irrigation, which was necessary in a country like Palestine, to ensure the growth and fertility of trees, many of which were doubtless imported from other countries. Thus the forest or the park was “luxuriant with trees,” and the trees planted by the channels of waters gave their fruit in their season, and their leaf did not wither—an apt and striking emblem of the godly man’s life, which seems to have impressed itself upon Solomon’s mind, and to have suggested the image in the First Psalm, a Psalm which, as I have shewn elsewhere, there is good reason for believing was written by Solomon.²

One such pleasaunce as this there was at Etam, Solomon’s Belvedere, as Josephus³ informs us. Thither it was the custom of the king, he says, to resort when he made his morning excursions from the city, clad in a white garment, and driving his chariot, surrounded by his body-guard of young men in the flower of their age, clad in Tyrian purple, and with gold-dust strewed upon their hair, so that their whole head sparkled when the sun shone upon it, and mounted upon horses from the royal stables, famed for their beauty and fleetness. “These morning excursions were usually to a certain place called Etam, about sixty stadia from Jerusalem.

¹ The word *parâds*, or “paradise,” is evidently of foreign, probably of Persian, extraction, and only occurs twice beside in the Old Testament : in the Song of Solomon, iv. 13, where the Authorized Version renders it “orchard,” an “orchard of pomegranates ;” and in Nehemiah ii. 8, where the Authorized Version has “forest.” In both places, as here, the LXX. give *παράδεισος* as the equivalent ; the Vulgate has *paradisus*, except in Nehemiah, where it has *silva*.

² I have given the reasons for this belief in my Commentary on that Psalm.

³ *Antiq.* viii. 7, 3.

Gardens and brooks made it as pleasant as it was fruitful." A watercourse from this place, the ruins of which are still visible, supplied the Temple with water. At the upper end of the winding valley, at a considerable height above the bottom, are three old Solomonic pools—large oblong basins of considerable compass, placed one behind the other in terraces. Almost at an equal height with the highest pool, at a distance of several hundred steps, there is a fountain, which is carefully built over; thence the pools were fed, the water being carried into the upper pool by a subterranean conduit.

To maintain all this state a large retinue of servants was necessary. Accordingly he tells us that he had slaves, male and female, purchased with his money (*mancipiæ*), and slaves born in his house (*vernæ*—Gen. xiv. 14; xv. 2; Jer. ii. 14. See 1 Kings iv. 26, 27; ix. 20, 21; 2 Chron. ix. 25); moreover, he had herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats, such as were never possessed by any king in Jerusalem before. Solomon's vast herds are mentioned 1 Kings iv. 23; viii. 63; 1 Chron. xxvii. 29, as are those of his father David. He amassed silver and gold, as we read in the history of Solomon, "Silver and gold at Jerusalem were as plenteous as stones" (1 Kings x. 27; cf. 2 Chron. i. 15; ix. 27).

And the peculiar treasure of kings and the provinces. The expression presents some difficulty. The word translated "peculiar treasure," in all the other passages where it occurs, except in 1 Chronicles xxix. 3, is applied to the people of Israel, who are spoken of as the "peculiar treasure" of God. In that passage, where the Authorized Version renders "mine own proper good," David is speaking of money, gold and

silver, which he had contributed out of his own privy purse in preparing for the building of the Temple. "I have a treasure of mine own," he says, "gold and silver." The word is used here in a similar sense. It has been explained, though I think wrongly, of the *peculiar products* of different countries, which were either sent as gifts or paid as tribute to Solomon. If we adhere to the strict meaning of the Hebrew word, we can only understand it either (1) of the treasures *accumulated by kings* and by the provinces, or (2) Solomon's own treasure, his privy purse, as *derived from* the gifts of kings and the provinces. Jerome seems to understand it, and I think rightly, in the latter sense, for he explains: "Sed et thesauri argenti et auri innumerabiles condebantur, quos mihi diversorum regum munera et gentium tributa contribuerant." The "kings" are not only vanquished monarchs, such as those mentioned in 1 Kings iv. 21, where we are told that Solomon reigned over all kings, from the river to the borders of Egypt, and that they brought gifts and served him all the days of his life; but monarchs like Hiram of Tyre, or like the Queen of Sheba, who gave gifts in token of amity.

The word "kings" is without the article; the word "provinces" is with the article. The former, therefore, is general; the latter is restricted: some particular provinces are meant. The word translated "province" means properly *jurisdiction*. It occurs only in the later Books of the Bible,¹ and is chiefly applied to the Persian provinces or satrapies; and hence the Israelites dwell-

¹ Professor Tayler Lewis, to evade the force of this fact as an argument for the later date of Ecclesiastes, remarks that the word is regularly formed from the old Hebrew root (*stin*), and argues that therefore it *might have been* used in 1 Kings iv. 7 to describe the provinces into which Solomon parcelled out his kingdom. The fact remains that it is *not* used there.

ing in a district in Persia are called "the sons of the province." Here, as the reference is to the reign of Solomon, we naturally look to the history for an explanation of the term; and we find that, according to 1 Kings iv. 7, &c., Solomon divided his kingdom into twelve districts, each having an officer over it "which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision." The general sense, then, seems to be that Solomon's privy purse was maintained by the contributions, free or enforced, of foreign monarchs and of his own subjects.

This vast wealth, this more than Oriental magnificence, had also its Oriental luxuriousness, and its ministries of voluptuous gratification. *I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, concubines of all sorts.* The men singers and women singers were intended to enliven the banquet (Isa. v. 12; Amos vi. 5), and were already found in the court of David.

The last two words of the Verse (*shiddah v'shiddoth*), which I have ventured to render, "concubines of all sorts," are of essentially doubtful interpretation. From the earliest time they have been rendered in all manner of different ways. The Greek interpreters are not agreed among themselves, and Jerome here follows Aquila, whilst the Targum and the Midrash give other explanations; and some of the later Rabbis again depart from the Targum and the Midrash. A bare enumeration of these interpretations will show what uncertainty hangs over the words. Thus the LXX. has *οἰνοχόους καὶ οἰνοχόας*—"cupbearers male and female," which is also the explanation of the Syriac; Aquila, *κυλίκιον καὶ κυλίκια*—"goblets of various kinds," and similarly Jerome, "*scyphos et urceos in ministerio ad*

vina fundenda; Symmachus, according to Jerome, "the setting out of tables"—*mensarum* (so, no doubt, and not *mensurarum*, should be read) *species et appositiones*; the Targum, "public baths," deriving the word from a root signifying "to pour out," and explaining that it refers to "pipes which pour out tepid water and pipes which pour out hot water;" the Midrash gives this explanation, and also another—"demons and demonesses," which Solomon, by his spells and magic arts, had made subservient to him; Qimkhi has, "all manner of musical instruments:" and this is followed by Luther and by our Authorized Version. Others explain, "chariot and chariots," especially "chariots for women;" others, "palanquins," or "litters," or think that these are put for the women who are carried in them. Others again, "lady and ladies," or "concubine and concubines," giving, however, different derivations to the word. Or, lastly, the words are not to have any special signification attached to them, but are to be regarded as a general expression, meaning "heap and heaps," and thus intended to amplify the words immediately preceding "the delights of the sons of men *in great abundance.*"¹

Two things only are clear; first, that the Hebrew idiom here employed, the repetition of the same noun in the singular and in the plural, denotes plurality with variety; secondly, that placed, as these words are, at the close of an enumeration, they must be designed to form a climax either by lending intensity to the last step of the series (thus the rendering will be, "in great abundance"), or as introducing some new feature more marked and prominent than the rest, as crowning the edifice of this "colossal apparatus" of worldly splendour

¹ So Ewald, Elster, Zörkler, Hengstenberg—"die Hülle und Fülle."

and self-gratification. On the whole, making the fullest allowance for the obscurity in which the words are enveloped and the uncertainty of the etymology, I have adopted the sense which seems best to harmonize with the context. It is scarcely credible that in so ample a description of Solomon's magnificence and luxury there should have been no reference at all to the harem of the monarch who had "three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines."

Verse 9.—All this was on a scale of unexampled splendour and magnificence, the like of which had never been seen before in Jerusalem. And as in the former experiments, so in this, he was master of himself: *Moreover, my wisdom remained with me* (or, as the words may be rendered, *my wisdom assisted me*). If he indulged the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, this was from no mere love of ostentation, no vulgar extravagance. The labour of his hands was itself a pleasure. For a while it served to divert him from anxious and bitter thoughts. There was a satisfaction in it so long as he could occupy himself with it; it was a joy to his heart, and this was his portion for all his labour. But when he turned seriously and thoughtfully to look at it all, when he reflected how soon he himself must leave all that he had amassed, how it would pass into other hands, how impossible it was to tell what use the next possessor would make of it; the old trouble returned, the old feeling of weariness, the old sense of the vanity of earthly things. Wisdom might excel folly as far as light excelled darkness, but wisdom itself could not give a man the power of deriving satisfaction from his pursuits, or make of them an enduring possession.

J. J. STEWART PEROWNE.