



REFORMATION
COMMENTARY
ON SCRIPTURE

OLD TESTAMENT
IX

PROVERBS,
ECCLESIASTES,
SONG OF SONGS

EDITED BY
DAVID C. FINK

GENERAL EDITOR
TIMOTHY GEORGE

ASSOCIATE
GENERAL EDITOR
SCOTT M. MANETSCH

Taken from *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* edited by David C. Fink.

Copyright ©2023 by David C. Fink, Timothy George, Scott M. Manetsch, and InterVarsity Press, LLC.

Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.

www.ivpress.com.

INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND SONG OF SONGS

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was a complex set of allied, competing, and at times antagonistic movements that erupted onto the European landscape over the course of a single generation, decisively altering the shape of Western Christendom for centuries to come. Although these movements differed significantly in their aims and origins, they were united by a common conviction that the renewal of church and society was inextricably linked with the renewal of biblical interpretation. Martin Luther's attack on the indulgence trade and subsequent confrontation with ecclesiastical and imperial authorities was sparked by a revolutionary new way of understanding certain themes in Paul's writings. No scene in the early history of the Reformation is more iconic than Luther's unyielding insistence at Worms in 1521 that his conscience was bound to the Word of God, and his recollections later in life of his own intellectual and spiritual development up to that point describe the turning point as hinging on a shift in his understanding of the Bible. Thus, in a passage familiar to most students of the Reformation, Luther relates that he "beat importunately upon Paul" until suddenly "a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself" to him, a moment that sparked for Luther a dramatic reconfiguration not only of that one passage in Paul but of the entire Bible itself. Similar stories can be told about analogous "breakthrough" events in other early Reformation movements: a conviction that the veneration of images ran afoul of the prohibitions against "graven images" in the Decalogue, or that the entanglement of church and state in the polities of Christendom represented a deep betrayal of the radical form of community life modeled by Jesus in the Gospels.¹

The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs were not the focal point in any of these debates. If the controversies over justification by faith or the purification of Christian worship from idolatry were earthquakes that shook the tectonic plates of dogma and devotion, these books from the Hebrew Bible's Wisdom literature were miles away from the epicenters of seismic activity in the Pauline letters, the Torah, or John's Gospel. This does not mean, however, that Reformation-era interpretation of these books was static or lacking in innovation. The shockwaves of

¹Accounts of Luther's intellectual development between the onset of the indulgence controversy and the Diet of Worms feature prominently in most critical biographies; see, for example, Scott H. Hendrix, *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015). The quoted passage in which Luther recalls his "breakthrough" moment is from the 1545 preface to his collected Latin works (LW 34:336-38; WA 54:185-86). For a succinct account of how biblical exegesis drove resistance to idolatry among the early Reformed movements, see David C. Steinmetz, "The Reformation and the Ten Commandments," *Interpretation* 43, no. 3 (1989): 256-66.

controversy reverberated through every part of the Bible as exegetes from all the major and emerging traditions set about the work of rethinking settled verities and exegetical assumptions in light of new theological insights. Where Luther “ran through the Bible from memory” in the immediate blaze of discovery, later Protestant exegetes combed through the text methodically in search of analogy, congruence, and confirmation, reconfiguring the shape of the biblical canon to meet the needs of confessional polemic and catechetical instruction. Readers of this commentary will not have to look far to find evidence of familiar reformational themes—justification by faith alone, *sola Scriptura*, the critique of images in worship, controversies over the nature and number of the sacraments, and so on—surfacing in the exegesis of these ancient books of wisdom.

Christian Hebraism

Sixteenth-century interpreters, however, did not merely rewrite the Bible to suit their own doctrinal tastes. On the contrary, the Reformation was from its earliest stages an outgrowth of the Renaissance imperative to return to the sources—in this case, the sources of Christian teaching, especially the Greek and Hebrew of the original texts. For our purposes, this means understanding the commentary tradition of the Reformation in the context of the emerging Christian Hebraism of the sixteenth century. A movement that often cut across confessional lines in its aims and sensibilities, Christian Hebraism was “an offshoot of Renaissance humanism whose devotees—biblical scholars, theologians, lawyers, physicians, scientists, philosophers, and teachers in Latin schools—borrowed and adapted texts, literary forms, and ideas from Jewish scholarship and tradition to meet Christian cultural and religious needs.”² These needs included the polemical demands of the moment—demonstrating, for example, that the *Hebraica veritas* supported a reformational reading of a particular text, as opposed to the distortions of the Latin Vulgate or “monkish glosses”—but were by no means exhausted by them. Several of the writers featured prominently in this volume, such as Konrad Pellikan, Sebastian Münster, and Ludwig Lavater, were pioneers in the recovery of the Hebrew language and rabbinic biblical scholarship for Christian readers, and virtually all the other scholars sampled here were influenced by their labors to one degree or another.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Christian Hebraism was still very much in its embryonic stages. Despite periodic calls for a recovery of scholarship in the biblical languages, few Christian theologians in the Middle Ages could read Hebrew with any real facility. In the fifteenth century, Italian humanists Marco Lippomanno, Giannozzo Manetti, and Pico della Mirandola had devoted themselves to serious study of the language with an eye toward producing more accurate translations of the Old Testament and tapping the wealth of Jewish commentary and scholarship for a Christian readership. But these efforts were slow in forming the necessary academic infrastructure for widespread dissemination, and they were often met with hostility

²Stephen G. Burnett and Seth Jerchow, *Hebraica Veritas? An Exhibition from the Collection of the Center for Judaic Studies Library* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Library, 2000), 5, quoted in Burnett, “Philosemitism and Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500–1620),” in *Geliebter Feind, gehasster Freund: Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Irene Diekmann and Elka-Vera Kotowski (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2009), 136.

from ecclesiastical authorities, as in the celebrated case of Johannes Reuchlin.³ Both Reuchlin and the Basel humanist Konrad Pellikan learned Hebrew through a combination of self-study and hiring Jewish tutors on an ad hoc basis, but starting around 1515, Hebrew language instruction was integrated into the academic curriculum at a number of universities, including Paris (1517), Wittenberg (1518), Louvain (1520), Ingolstadt (1520), Freiburg im Briesgau (1521), Strasbourg (1523), Basel (1524), Rome (1524), Zurich (1525), Bern (1527), Marburg (1527), and Salamanca (1530).⁴

By the middle of the sixteenth century, most major commentators were at least attempting to reckon with advances in linguistic and textual scholarship, and the interpretive landscape was starting to evolve rapidly as new editions, translations, and exegetical tools began to flood the marketplace. It is difficult to make broad generalizations about how Reformation-era interpreters made use of these new tools, so widely varied was the practice. For some, such as the German Lutheran pastor Lucas Osiander, the Latin Vulgate remained the point of departure for exegesis: his commentary on Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, the Psalter, the Proverbs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, first published in 1576, printed the received text in Latin type with his own commentary in italics, and despite the subtitle (*Emended According to the Hebrew Truth*), the corrections were minimal. At the other end of the spectrum, Konrad Pellikan's massive commentary on the entire Old Testament (including the Greek deuterocanonical books), published in four volumes between 1534 and 1538, was based on the author's own translation from the original languages, with only scarce (and usually polemical) reference to the Vulgate. Others, like Philipp Melanchthon, seem to have adopted a more eclectic practice. In his commentaries on Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, Melanchthon gave his own idiosyncratic translation, one that often preserved the wording of the Vulgate, but informed both by the Hebrew and by the Greek Septuagint. The same is also true of the commentaries written by Tommaso de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan. More commonly known today as Luther's nemesis at Augsburg, Cajetan was one of the foremost exponents of Thomism in his generation. But he was also a serious student of the new biblical philology, a fact that belies the simplistic juxtaposition of humanism and scholastic theology.⁵

³Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522) was a German lawyer and humanist, and one of the early transmitters of Christian Hebraism to northern Europe. He published a Hebrew grammar in 1506 and several subsequent works on the kabbalistic tradition and promoted publication of the Talmud and other sources of rabbinic biblical scholarship. These publications, combined with Reuchlin's championing of Jewish rights in the imperial court, led to heresy charges for being "impermissibly favorable to the Jews." Several of Reuchlin's works were eventually condemned, and he was forced into retirement, though by recanting his views he was able to avoid harsher penalties. His case eventually became a cause célèbre for the humanists, who portrayed Reuchlin as a champion of the new learning against the backward obscurantism of the scholastic theological establishment. For an excellent treatment of the affair, see David H. Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴Stephen G. Burnett, "Christian Hebraism," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther*, ed. Derek R. Nelson and Paul R. Hinlicky, Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 255. For developments in Christian study of the Hebrew Bible more broadly during this period, see Alastair Hamilton, "The Study of Tongues: The Semitic Languages and the Bible in the Renaissance," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3, *From 1450 to 1750*, ed. Euan Cameron, 17–36 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁵Michael O'Connor, *Cajetan's Biblical Commentaries: Motive and Method*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

This period also saw a proliferation of different types of commentary, or at least of commentaries tailored for particular purposes. At one end of the spectrum, we have highly specialized works of scholarship aimed at an academic readership conversant in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, and engaging in matters of philology and textual criticism. So, for example, in 1525 Sebastian Münster provided the Hebrew text of the Song of Songs along with his own Latin translation on the facing pages, followed by extensive textual, grammatical, and lexical annotations, a format similar to the annotations of earlier humanists such as Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus.⁶ Münster's work proved to be foundational for later Christian Hebraists, commentators, and preachers, but given the narrowly philological focus of his annotations, with little development of the literary or theological significance of his scholarship, its influence remains largely in the background in the present volume. At the other end of the spectrum is an array of publications aimed at a more popular readership, including commentaries focused on theological and pastoral aims, collections of sermons (on entire books or selected passages thereof), verse and prose paraphrases, and other works more difficult to define by genre. In keeping with the aims of the Reformation Commentary on Scripture series, I have tended to favor selections engaging in theological and ethical reflection on the text rather than the purely textual or topical, though when appropriate I have tried to highlight selections that demonstrate how advances in biblical philology influenced theological exegesis.

Between Ancient and Modern

The humanists, biblical scholars, and reformers collected in this volume stood at the onset of an intellectual movement that would have far-reaching effects for the ways in which modern readers understand the Bible. The Renaissance impulse to return to the sources (*ad fontes*) and the Reformation insistence on the Bible as the ultimate norm for theology and practice (*sola Scriptura*) unleashed tremendous intellectual energy directed toward understanding the text in its original, historical contexts. In the centuries to come, these impulses would lead to increasingly critical approaches, as well as a divergence between historical study of the Bible on the one hand and theological interpretation on the other.⁷ Both the Protestant reformers and their Catholic opponents stood squarely on the same side of the gap that subsequently would open up between ancient and modern interpretation. The biblical scholar James Kugel has summarized this “ancient” or “precritical” approach to biblical interpretation as bounded by four assumptions: (1) The Bible is a fundamentally cryptic text, with multivalent levels of meaning. Often when the text says one thing, it means another, and the job of the interpreter is to move beyond the surface to penetrate the hidden depths of its meaning. (2) The Bible contains spiritual and ethical guidance of abiding relevance beyond its immediate historical context. The Bible may not have been written to later

⁶Sebastian Münster, שִׁיר הַשְּׁמִירִים *Canticum Canticorum Salomonis, Latine iuxta Hebraicum contextum per Sebastianum Munsterum translatum, atque annotationibus aliquot nonnihil illustratum* (Basil, 1525).

⁷See, for instance, Keith D. Stanglin, *The Letter and Spirit of Biblical Interpretation: From the Early Church to Modern Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018); Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

generations of Christians, but it was certainly written *for* their guidance and instruction. (3) The Bible is a perfectly harmonious text, with no contradictions or mistakes; it may be an anthology of texts written by different human authors at different times and places, but despite apparent contradictions its constituent parts are bound together by an underlying unity of purpose. This is because (4) the Bible is a divinely inspired book, by which God speaks to humanity through his prophets.⁸

The Song of Songs: A cryptic text. Taken as a whole, these four assumptions are as much characteristic of the reformers in the sixteenth century as they were of the rabbis and church fathers of antiquity, or the monastic commentators in the Middle Ages. However, subtle differences were beginning to emerge. Consider the first of these assumptions, the notion that the Bible is a cryptic text. It is still widely believed in many quarters that the Reformation represented a rejection of allegorical or spiritual interpretation in favor of the literal or historical sense of the text. To be sure, there is abundant evidence of Reformation polemic against the supposed excesses of medieval allegorization, and if one limits one's purview to exegesis of the Pauline letters, for example, or certain passages in the Gospels, this characterization might appear to be well founded.⁹ But the illusion quickly dissipates upon first contact with Protestant exegesis of other portions of the canon, such as the Song of Songs. Without exception, all of the sources collected in this volume agree that the Song is, in its first and primary valence, an allegorical representation of spiritual realities that transcend or even occlude altogether the poem's ostensible meaning at the literal level—that is, as a celebration of human sexuality and erotic desire. I am aware of no published commentary or preaching on this text from the sixteenth century that insists on a purely literal interpretation of the Song, and the few instances we know of when such a suggestion was tendered resulted in considerable scandal—most famously in the case of Sebastian Castellio, who was dismissed from his teaching post in Geneva owing in part to his rejection of the Song from the biblical canon on grounds that it was “a malicious and obscene song in which Solomon describes his shameless acts of lovemaking.”¹⁰ Several years earlier, Erasmus had been pilloried by Luther for describing the poem as an “amatory song,” even though (unlike Castellio) he did not regard this as undermining the book's authority or its place in the canon. “Is it not an amatory Song?” Erasmus asked plaintively in his defense. “Does ‘amatory’ always have bad connotations?”¹¹ For Luther, such a characterization was not only inadmissible but offensive. Other exegetes, like the French Lutheran François Lambert or the Dutch scholar Hugo Grotius, allowed that the

⁸James Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 14-15.

⁹One instance from a mountain of similar statements must suffice here. Commenting on Daniel 10:6, Calvin writes, “I am aware of the plausible nature of allegories, but when we reverently weigh the teachings of the Holy Spirit, those speculations which at first sight pleased us exceedingly vanish from our view. I am not captivated by these enticements myself, and I wish all my hearers to be persuaded of this—nothing can be better than a sober treatment of Scripture. We ought never to fetch from a distance subtle explanations, for the true sense will, as I have previously expressed it, flow naturally from a passage when it is weighted with maturer deliberation.” CTS 13:242.

¹⁰Or so Calvin characterized Castellio's views (CO 11:675); cited in James Alfred Loader, “Calvin and the Canticles,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 35, no. 2 (2009): 57-75, at 58.

¹¹CWE 76:291.

poem did contain erotic themes, but that these were in turn the bearers of a deeper spiritual meaning, pointing to the ravishing love of God for his people.¹²

How shall we reconcile the reformers' frequent polemics against allegory with their lockstep insistence that the Song be read allegorically? In part, the difficulty lies in the inconsistent use of terminology, both then and now. There simply were no clearly universally agreed-on definitions for terms like *allegory*, *type*, or even *literal sense*.¹³ There were, however, broad patterns of usage that can help clarify common interpretive practices. At the risk of anachronism, I shall describe these different modes using a distinction introduced two centuries prior to the Reformation by the Italian poet and theologian Dante Alighieri. Writing in his *Convivio*, Dante sets out a distinction between two kinds of allegory, that of the poets and that of the theologians. Allegory of the poets Dante describes as "a truth hidden under the beautiful lie." This type of allegory is a conscious literary device employed by authors to say one thing while meaning another, "as when Ovid says that Orpheus calmed beasts with his lyre, and made the trees and rocks to move toward him."¹⁴ Nobody supposes that any of this really happened—not even Ovid. The real meaning is that "the wise man with the instrument of his voice makes cruel hearts mild and humble, and moves at will those who have no life of knowledge and art."¹⁵ Notice that with the allegory of the poets, the literal sense is patently false and textual meaning is monovalent: this *for* that. By contrast, the allegory of the theologians is an interpretive strategy employed by readers uniquely in the case of holy Scripture. In this case, the literal sense points to historical realities, and these in turn are interpreted as pointing to transcendent realities beyond themselves.¹⁶ Here the literal sense is presumed to be true, and textual meaning is multivalent: this *and* that. As an example of this second kind of allegory, Dante gives a compact demonstration of the medieval "fourfold method" for Psalm 114, which begins, "When Israel came out of Egypt."

For if we inspect the letter alone, the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses is presented to us; if the allegory, our redemption wrought by Christ; if the moral sense, the conversion of the soul from the grief and misery of sin to the state of grace is presented to us; if the anagogical, the departure of the holy soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of

¹²Lambert, *In Cantica Cantorum Salomonis*, 1r-2v.

¹³As Deena Copeland Klepper observes, "Sixteenth-century exegetes were able to abandon the fourfold sense of Scripture in favour of a 'purely' literal sense to whatever degree they did, largely because the innovations of the thirteenth century had provided a model for incorporating figurative language and prophecy within the literal sense." "Theories of Interpretation: The Quadriga and Its Successors," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3, *From 1450 to 1750*, ed. Euan Cameron (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 437.

¹⁴My summary in this paragraph follows the exposition by Charles S. Singleton in his celebrated essay "Allegory," in *Dante's "Commedia": Elements of Structure* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1954), 1-17.

¹⁵Dante, *Convivio: A Dual-Language Critical Edition*, ed. Andrew Frisardi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 59.

¹⁶A classic statement of this view can be found in Thomas Aquinas: "The author of Holy Scripture is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do) but also by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the property that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal and presupposes it." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q.1, a.10, resp. In *Summa Theologiae Prima Pars*, 1-49, trans. Laurence Shapcote (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 14-15.

eternal glory is presented to us. And although these mystic senses have each their special denominations, they may all in general be called allegorical, since they differ from the literal and historical.¹⁷

This distinction between the allegory of the poets and the allegory of the theologians, while never (to my knowledge) employed specifically by Reformation-era writers, can nevertheless go a long way in helping us understand what they were actually doing. When Luther rejects any hint of the Song's "amatory" character while at the same time insisting that he is doing nothing more than getting "at the simplest sense and real character of this book," he is not being inconsistent; he is reading it as an allegory of the poets.¹⁸ That is, he is interpreting the poem as a self-conscious literary device on the part of the author to say one thing while meaning another: "For this is the custom with kings and princes: they compose and sing amatory ballads *which the crowd takes* to be songs about a bride or a sweetheart, *when in fact* they portray the condition of their state and people with their songs."¹⁹ Thus, for Luther the meaning is monovalent: this *for* that. Anyone who fixates on the amatory nature of the song makes the same vulgar mistake as the crowd, mistaking form for reality. Contrast this with Lambert, who insists that Scripture often represents spiritual realities under the "type" of bodily—even sexual—realities: "Indeed, if according to the opinion of Paul in Ephesians 5 the pure marriage bed holds a great mystery in Christ and the Church, and if kisses, the womb, the navel, and other such things belong to the sanctity of marriage, then it was necessary to be mindful of all of these in order that the truth signified may fully be opened."²⁰ Thus, for Lambert the meaning is multivalent: this *and* that; anyone who excludes the bodily and physical risks tearing the Scripture apart. In response to critics who blush at what all this talk of "kisses, breasts, the womb, the navel, flower beds, and all the rest call to mind," Lambert asks in exasperation why they don't also seek to expunge other racy passages, like this one: "You grew and arrived at the flower of womanhood. Your breasts grew large, and your hair sprouted" (Ezek 16:7)! There is no use being squeamish about such things, Lambert argues; they are persistent themes in Scripture, and as such they are both good in themselves and capable of bearing a higher order of meaning.

The reformers thus regarded the Song of Songs as a cryptic text, but they differed dramatically among themselves as to *how* they thought its hidden meanings should be unlocked. In this they were heirs to a long tradition of allegorical interpretation stretching back to the earliest centuries of the Christian era. Though varying considerably in scope and execution, three main trajectories of interpretation may be discerned in the centuries prior to the Reformation. The first, and perhaps the most dominant, was the ecclesiological reading, first expounded by Origen of Alexandria in the third century and brought to classic expression by Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth. This line of interpretation took its point of departure in the ancient rabbinic practice of

¹⁷This from the "Letter to Can Grande," cited in Singleton, "Allegory," 14.

¹⁸LW 15:191 (WA 31.2:586).

¹⁹LW 15:193 (emphasis added).

²⁰Lambert, *In Cantica Cantorum Salomonis*, 11.

reading the Song as a figural representation of God's love for his chosen people, the Jews. Christian exegetes either redirected this referent to the church or argued that the ancient synagogue itself pointed to the consummation of God's jealous and electing love in the Christian community. This mode of interpretation, as E. Ann Matter has shown, was the basic default for Christian interpretation of the Song and lay latent in the other main readings even when not the explicit focus of exposition.²¹ The second major interpretive tradition was the tropological (or mystical), a mode of reading that focused on the relationship between God and the individual Christian soul. This approach is most characteristic of the monastic commentaries of the ninth through the twelfth centuries, and is epitomized in the preaching and commentary of Bernard of Clairvaux. Finally, a minor theme building on the first two and arising first in liturgical contexts was the Mariological reading. This interpretation, developed most fully by Rupert of Deutz early in the twelfth century, viewed the Blessed Virgin Mary as the female interlocutor in the poem's dialogue. As the lover addressed directly by Christ, she was both the historical source and embodiment of the church, as well as the ideal "model of monastic virtues: virginity, humility, and obedience."²²

Early Protestant exegetes embraced the first two of these modes and rejected the third—that is, they tended to interpret the Song either as an allegory of Christ's love for the church or as a figure of the individual soul's growth in intimacy with Christ. Unsurprisingly, given Reformation polemics against medieval monasticism and the veneration of the saints, there was little interest in the Mariological mode of interpretation. Despite these objections, however, there was no shortage of creative approaches to allegorizing the Song. Two particularly ingenious approaches deserve mention. The first is Luther's strategy of reading the poem as an "an encomium of the political order" in poetic form, a text that "deals with matters of the loftiest and greatest kind, namely with divinely ordained governments, or with the people of God."²³ Reading the text as a coded treatise on political theory has struck many later readers as bizarre, and though certain of his insights were picked up and repeated by later Lutheran exegetes, such as Lucas Osiander and Johann Gerhard, Luther's rather idiosyncratic approach seems not to have been widely adopted outside confessional Lutheranism. There was, however, an equally novel and ingenious mode of interpretation among Reformed writers in the commentaries of Thomas Brightman and John Cotton. These English Puritan pastors read the Song as an apocalyptic text, one that unfolds the history of God's people in symbolic form from the earliest stages of biblical history up through their own era, a continuous narrative building up to the consummation of salvation history in the establishment of God's millennial kingdom on earth—an event they regarded as imminent. Modern readers will likely find such interpretive approaches to be overly schematic or fanciful, but both may rightly be regarded as an extension of the earlier ecclesiological mode of allegory, in that

²¹E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 86.

²²Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*, 163.

²³LW 15:195, 192.

the aim was to shed light on the intimate and mysterious ways in which God's grace worked itself out in wooing and preserving his chosen people.

Proverbs: A relevant text. The creativity of Protestant exegesis of the Song of Songs during this period only underscores the imperative to read the Bible as a text that speaks to the moral and spiritual needs of its readers. Read allegorically, the Song could lead the faithful into deeper intimacy with Christ or provide comfort for congregations of persecuted dissenters unsure of their place in the turbulent flow of redemptive history. But other texts seemed to bear on the ordinary lives of congregants and citizens in a much clearer and more direct manner. The book of Proverbs, in particular, was viewed as the manual for practical ethics par excellence, and no one did more to establish it in this role for Protestant congregations than Philipp Melanchthon, Luther's right-hand man in Wittenberg. Melanchthon is more widely known for his systematic theology (the *Loci Communes*) and for his exegesis of the Greek New Testament—indeed, his academic appointment was as a professor of Greek at the University of Wittenberg, and he never developed the same mastery of the Hebrew language as he did of Greek. But Melanchthon invested tremendous energy in expounding the book of Proverbs; according to Timothy Wengert, “Next to Romans and Colossians, there was no book of the Bible on which Melanchthon produced more commentaries than Proverbs.”²⁴ Why did Melanchthon invest so much time and effort on this book? At first blush, the choice seems rather strange; we might expect that he would have had more pressing exegetical work in other parts of the biblical canon, where the new humanistic learning and Luther's revolutionary theological insights were forcing the reevaluation of central Christian doctrines and practices. Lecturing and writing on the Proverbs may seem like a retreat into a relative biblical backwater, but set in the context of humanist educational reforms, Melanchthon's interest in the Proverbs makes perfect sense.

By the time Melanchthon took up his teaching post in Wittenberg in 1518, Erasmus had just released the third edition of his celebrated *Adages*, a work intended to harvest the practical wisdom and literary elegance of pagan antiquity for a revived curriculum of Christian moral formation. Erasmus was convinced that these pagan proverbs, more so than the ancient myths or fables, lent themselves most readily to adaptation and assimilation in a wider body of Christian learning. According to one scholar, Erasmus felt that the legacy of classical antiquity was most clearly captured “in proverbs, in excerpts, in gemlike and durable fragments, or in texts which, like Homer's, seem made to be weighed and assimilated in fragments.”²⁵ Melanchthon's commentary on the Proverbs seems to be an attempt to do for the Wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible what Erasmus had done for the adages of pagan antiquity: to demonstrate the abiding value of these gemlike fragments of ancient wisdom for the renewal of Western Christendom. But unlike the *Adages*

²⁴Timothy J. Wengert, “The Biblical Commentaries of Philip Melanchthon,” in *Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) and the Commentary*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert and M. Patrick Graham (Sheffield: University of Sheffield Press, 1997), 55. A total of three separate commentaries were published under Melanchthon's name during his lifetime, the first of which was a pirated set of student notes on his class lectures published without his permission.

²⁵Daniel Kinney, “Erasmus' *Adagia*: Midwife to the Rebirth of Learning,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 11, no. 2 (1981): 169–92, at 172.

of Erasmus, Melanchthon's commentary on the Proverbs contains a harder theological edge. Though clearly appreciative of the political, economic, and social wisdom contained in the proverbs of pagan antiquity, Melanchthon was at pains to demonstrate the superiority of the wisdom revealed to Solomon. The biblical Proverbs are superior, he observes, not only because of their origin but also on account of their subject matter. Writing in the prologue to his 1529 *Nova Scholia*, Melanchthon contrasted the writings of ancient writers such as Hesiod, Theognis, and Phocylides, who collected proverbs illuminating "the customs of civic life." The Proverbs of Solomon deal with these matters at length, of course, but what makes them different is that they also touch on higher things: "on the will of God, the fear of God, faith, and the cross."²⁶

Melanchthon was one of the first, and perhaps the most influential, early Protestant interpreters of the Proverbs, but he was by no means unusual in the way he found contemporary relevance for the text by reading it against the backdrop of the wisdom of pagan antiquity. In fact, one of the most striking features of early modern commentary on the Bible's Wisdom literature is the eagerness of exegetes to coordinate revealed wisdom with secular. Nor should we assume that the contrast was always negative. For many early modern writers—especially those, like Melanchthon, who had been schooled in the texts and methods of Renaissance humanism—the writers of ancient Greece and Rome represented the best of what human wit and wisdom could accomplish on its own, unaided by God's saving grace. Such accomplishments may be incomplete or even at times opposed to the saving knowledge of God imparted in the gospel, but they were of undeniable value in organizing a degree of relative peace, justice, and prosperity in worldly affairs. Seen in this light, it comes as no surprise to find early modern exegetes weighing the biblical wisdom carefully against the harvest of antiquity. When secular writers could be found expressing similar sentiments, it could be taken as evidence that the biblical text was expressing a truth widely available to human reason, and thus one that could serve as a basis for ordering justice in the secular world. When the biblical wisdom was found to stand in tension with the secular, it could be taken as an indication of a revealed truth that transcended the wisdom of this world.

Consider, for example, Melanchthon's exegesis of Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint." He begins by identifying "prophetic vision" with the advice given to rulers by godly prophets, citing the examples of Elisha and Isaiah, who during their lifetimes curbed the worst instincts of the kings of Samaria and Judah. The beneficial effects of their advice can be seen, Melanchthon observes, in the way that each kingdom slid precipitously into ruin after the prophets' deaths. The biblical proverb does not identify the underlying reason for this decline, but Melanchthon sees a corollary principle in some lines from the Roman poet Claudian, who attributed the enduring rule of Rome to the restraint of its laws, in contrast with other fallen empires of the ancient world, which had lacked such restraint:

Nor will there ever be a limit to the empire of Rome, *for luxury and its attendant vices, and pride with sequent hate have brought to ruin all kingdoms else.* 'Twas thus that Sparta laid low the foolish

²⁶Philipp Melanchthon, *Nova Scholia in Proverbia Salomonis* (Hagenau, 1531), 4r.

pride of Athens but to fall herself a victim to Thebes; thus that the Mede deprived the Assyrian of empire and the Persian the Mede. Macedonia subdued Persia and was herself to yield to Rome. But Rome found her strength in the oracles of the Sibyl, her vigour in the hallowed laws of Numa.²⁷

Melanchthon cites only the italicized lines above in his commentary, lines that fill out the contrast implied in the Solomonic proverb: prophetic guidance preserves a kingdom, while luxury, pride, and hate bring it to ruin. The wider context of the original text, which I have quoted above, goes on to attribute Rome's avoidance of these vices to the prophetic guidance of the Sibyl and the laws of Numa. Melanchthon, however, pivots back to the second line of the proverb: "But Solomon goes further, telling what sort of prophetic guidance is needed when he says, 'blessed is the one who keeps the law,' as if to say that prophetic guidance is such that it holds on to true doctrine and true rites of worship, and gives counsels which are congruent with the word of God."²⁸ In other words, the first line of the Solomonic proverb expresses the exact same insight the sages of ancient Rome had learned from bitter experience, while the second half redirects the content of their piety and doctrine back to the sources of divine revelation in the word of God. Like centuries of Christian readers before them, Melanchthon and the other early modern interpreters believed strongly that the Bible was a source of moral and spiritual wisdom that could guide human behavior in all facets of life, and in the aftermath of the humanist recovery of the wisdom of ancient Greece and Rome they sought to bring the Bible's guidance into conversation with as wide a literary field as possible.

Ecclesiastes: A harmonious text? The Reformation was in large part a battle over the meaning of the Bible—*who* should read it, *how* it should be read, and *whose* judgments counted in applying its teaching or settling disputes over its meaning. But all sides in the disputes of this period more or less took for granted that the Bible was both true and ultimately coherent in its teachings. The rapid diffusion of textual and linguistic expertise championed by the humanists during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was accompanied by a shifting set of sensibilities as to how best to understand texts as products, each of a unique historical context. The result was that students of ancient literature became more deeply attuned to the ways in which language itself changed over time, and more wary of anachronism in interpretation.

These new critical sensibilities were on striking display in Lorenzo Valla's *Declamation on the Forged Donation of Constantine* of 1440, which demonstrated conclusively on the basis of internal evidence that the emperor Constantine's purported "donation" of imperial lands and power to the church at the end of his reign was a later forgery.²⁹ So subversive of papal claims to power was Valla's work that it was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1559—more than a century after its publication!—but there was no stopping the dissemination of the critical questions Valla asked or the demands for historical corroboration. For example, if Constantine had really transferred

²⁷LCL 136:54-55.

²⁸CR 14:79.

²⁹For a succinct account of this incident, see Charles G. Nauert Jr., *Humanism and the Culture of the Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 38-40.

authority over the Western empire to Pope Sylvester I as the document claimed, where were the imperial edicts issued in Sylvester's name? Where were the coins minted with his likeness? Why were there no other documents in the imperial or papal registries attesting to such a momentous political transformation? Moreover, Valla deployed his superior knowledge of classical Latin to demonstrate that the style and vocabulary of the *Donation* could not possibly date to the age of Constantine, but used terminology and forms of address that only developed centuries later. The effect of these arguments on the status of the *Donation* itself was devastating. Apologists for papal power were quick to point out that the jurisdictional claims of the Petrine see did not stand or fall with this one text, nor was Valla himself attempting to overthrow papal power altogether. But the kinds of questions he was asking and the new awareness of language itself as a cultural artifact had implications far beyond the study of papal registries in the Vatican libraries. The implications for the study of the Bible were real and apparent, as Valla himself slyly let drop in one passage: "When I was a boy, I remember asking someone who had written the Book of Job. When he answered, 'Job himself,' I asked the further question of how therefore he managed to mention his own death. This can be said of many other books, although it is not appropriate to discuss them here."³⁰

The three books traditionally attributed to Solomon in the Hebrew Bible raised similar, uncomfortable questions. The narrative frame for this attribution was 1 Kings 1–11, which describes the struggle over succession following the death of King David; God's gift of wisdom to Solomon and the fame, wealth, and power that this gift brought to his reign; his construction and dedication of the temple in Jerusalem; and finally his fall into idolatry, led astray by his many foreign wives. This narrative in itself was deeply unsettling: if God had indeed granted Solomon "a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you" (1 Kings 3:12), then why was this wisdom insufficient to preserve Solomon from idolatry? True, his father David had sinned spectacularly, but David's lapses had always been presented as isolated incidents, quickly followed by sincere and humble repentance. Not so with Solomon: the Scripture only relates that "his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God" (1 Kings 11:4), with no mention of any subsequent change of heart. The ambiguous legacy of Solomon is stated concisely by the prophet Nehemiah: "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin" (13:26).

This ambiguity raised a difficult problem for premodern interpreters of the books traditionally associated with Solomon: if they were written prior to his fall into sin, they would seem to be relics of an earlier, immature character, a wisdom as yet untested by all that the world would throw at it. Moreover, at least two of the books in question, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, give strong evidence of the writer's firsthand experience with the delights of the flesh. Is it likely that a young man who had said to himself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself" (Eccles 2:1), only to find in it nothing but vanity, would return later in life to

³⁰Lorenzo Valla, *On the Donation of Constantine*, trans. G. W. Bowersock, I Tatti Renaissance Library 24 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 113.

have his hard-won wisdom overthrown by the delights of the harem? On the other hand, if Solomon had written these words after his fall, why is there no account of his restoration in 1 Kings? And why would he have failed to mention the wives and concubines who had led him astray in Ecclesiastes?³¹

Early modern interpreters wrestled with these questions of authorship and the canonical setting of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs at some length. Most were content to take at face value the authorial ascriptions and read these texts as products of the same inspired author, albeit at different periods of life. Luther, however, seems to have been one of the first Christian interpreters to introduce doubts on this score. In his published commentary on Ecclesiastes, Luther attributes the text to Solomon, but suggests that he is speaking in a persona, rather than merely relating his own personal experience in unvarnished form:

I think that these words were spoken by Solomon in some assembly of his retinue, perhaps after dinner or even during dinner to some great and prominent men who were present. He spoke this way after he had thought long and hard to himself about the condition and the vanity of human affairs, or rather of human affections. Then he poured this out to those who were present, as usually happens, and afterwards what he said was put down and assembled by the leaders of the community or of the church. . . . This is, then, a public sermon which they heard from Solomon, on the basis of which it seemed appropriate to call this book Qoheleth—not in the sense that Solomon himself was a preacher but that this book was preached as though it had been a public sermon.³²

Some decades earlier, Denis the Carthusian had also described Solomon's narrative voice in Ecclesiastes as a shifting set of personas adopted as a literary convention, so both Luther and Denis appear to be introducing a degree of literary distance between Solomon the character (Ecclesiastes) and Solomon the historical figure (1 Kings). Luther had been more explicit on this point two years earlier in the preface to his German translation: "Now this book was certainly not written or set down by King Solomon with his own hand. Instead scholars put together what others had heard from Solomon's lips. . . . That is to say, certain persons selected by the kings and the people were at that time appointed to fix and arrange this and other books that were handed down by Solomon, the one shepherd."³³ But in a dinner-table speech of his own several years later (1533), Luther went even further, suggesting that Ecclesiastes may have been written "by Sirach in the time of the Maccabees," and he compared it to the Talmud as a derivative work stitched together from an assembly of earlier sources.³⁴

Even more forceful in his rejection of the tradition of Solomonic authorship was Hugo Grotius, writing a century later. Grotius argued on the basis of Hebrew lexicography that the ascription

³¹For an explicit elaboration of these questions, see the comments of Johann Gerhard on the superscription to the Song of Songs.

³²LW 15:12 (WA 20:14-15).

³³WA DB II.1:23; LW 35:263.

³⁴WA Tr I:207, no. 698. Scott Jones has argued forcefully that the transcriber of Luther's *Tischreden* mistook "Ecclesiastes" for "Ecclesiasticus" in this instance, with the result that Luther is better understood as offering comment on the authorship of Sirach, not "the Preacher." Jones, "Solomon's Table Talk: Martin Luther on the Authorship of Ecclesiastes," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 28, no. 1 (2014): 81-90.

“Qoheleth” was better translated as “the Gatherer” than “the Preacher,” with the result that the book ought to be viewed, like Job, as a largely fictional construct assembled for the purpose of showcasing the full range of opinions on what makes for human happiness offered by the various philosophical schools current at the time of its writing. And like Valla with the *Donation of Constantine* two centuries earlier, for Grotius it was the linguistic arguments that clinched the case: “For my part, however, I do not think that it is Solomon’s; rather, it was written later under the name of that king, as though he had been led to repentance. In support of this argument I can point to many words which you will not find anywhere else but in Daniel, Esdras, and other Chaldean translations.”³⁵ It is important to note that for none of the interpreters discussed above did these considerations regarding authorship undermine the essential truth of the text or the appropriateness of canonical interpretation. Whether or not Solomon was the *literal* author of Ecclesiastes (or of Proverbs or the Song of Songs), he was clearly the implied *literary* author, which meant that the text was best understood within the broad narrative sweep of the Israelite monarchy at apogee, and even authors like Luther and Grotius who expressed doubts as to Solomonic authorship continued to read the text within this canonical narrative framework.

Three inspired texts. The biblical scholars and commentators who appear in the following pages were united by a common love and veneration for the Bible as God’s word for humanity, and the assiduous efforts they lavished on its every word and turn of phrase bear witness to their conviction that here, above all other places, is where the highest wisdom can be found. In the sermons, commentaries, treatises, and paraphrases produced by these early modern pastors and scholars, we can catch a sense of the urgency that infused their reading of Scripture, their sense of answering the critical demands of a moment when careful exegesis of the Bible mattered. It mattered because they stood at a critical junction in history, when old habits of thought and speech and worship were being reconfigured in light of a fresh understanding of Scripture’s message. Far from being a sterile academic exercise or a futile gesture of protest against an indifferent secular world, Reformation engagement with Scripture responded to a swiftly changing landscape and set the agenda for congregations and for kingdoms.

The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs cover a wide range of literary genres and an even wider range of thematic topics. The book of Proverbs alone is a veritable encyclopedia of practical ethics, touching on matters of politics and the common good; money and economic justice; marriage, sex, and family life; private virtue and public justice. Ecclesiastes had long been read as a treatise urging *contemptus mundi*—that is, a demonstration of the vanity of earthly pleasures and a commendation of the higher, spiritual duties. It retained this character for many early modern exegetes, but when it came in contact with the Reformation theology of salvation by faith alone, and its consequent rejection of monastic asceticism, it was reinterpreted as a commendation of those same worldly goods, received as gifts from the God who gives all things freely. The Song of Songs, as I have already observed, was often read as a cipher pointing to the mysteries of

³⁵Grotius, *Annotationes in Vetus Testamentum*, 258.

God's love for his people, but increasingly it came to be acknowledged (even if only tacitly) that even the most intimate delights of the body could also be received as God's good gifts.

Given the staggering diversity of subject matter covered in these books, it is impossible to do justice to the breadth, depth, and creative brilliance of exegetical insight stretching over the roughly two centuries this commentary series aims to cover. I make no pretense at having presented a complete or even representative sampling of the exegetical perspectives on offer. The reader will no doubt notice that I have played favorites from time to time: Cardinal Cajetan, Philipp Melanchthon, and Michel Cop on the Proverbs; Martin Luther and Jean de Serres on Ecclesiastes; Theodore Beza, Melchior Hoffman, and the English Puritans on the Song of Songs. In each section of the commentary these "mainstays" seemed to me to have set the agenda for other interpreters, who often responded to their exegesis. When possible, I have tried to give my readers a sense of the lively cut and thrust of exegetical debate as it developed around certain passages—for example, debates over the nature of work and vocation in Proverbs 6 or Christology in Proverbs 8; the propriety of usury in Proverbs 28 or slavery in Ecclesiastes 2; the nature of allegory and figural interpretation running all through the Song. But on the whole, I have followed my own judgment in presenting selections that struck me as particularly insightful, novel, influential, or just plain eyebrow-raising. I hope readers will find themselves as captivated as I have been in watching these early modern interpreters at work and be drawn—as were they themselves—back to the sources.

COMMENTARY ON PROVERBS

OVERVIEW: The book of Proverbs presented Reformation-era commentators with both a challenge and an opportunity: the challenge was to find common themes within what often seemed to be disparate or loosely-held-together pieces of advice and admonition; the opportunity was to apply this biblical wisdom to their ministries, their theologies, and the lives of those they served. In their introductory comments on the book, they considered several questions that resonate throughout their interpretation of the text: What exactly is a proverb? What is the place of this book among the works often ascribed to Solomon? And, most importantly, what is the nature of biblical wisdom, how does it compare to other forms of wisdom, and how does it apply to the Christian life?

THREE KINDS OF WISDOM. DENIS THE CARTHUSIAN: “The Lord said to Solomon: ‘Because you have asked for wisdom. . . . Behold! I have given you a wise and understanding heart, in so much as there has been no one like you before, nor will there arise after you.’” In these words three things are mentioned: first, the excellence of the wisdom granted to Solomon; second, in what way or from whom he received it; and third, the meritorious cause of this generous infusion of wisdom—namely, that when given the option to ask for whatever he wanted, he asked for wisdom rather than riches, long life, or fame, or triumph.

In short, wisdom was given to Solomon that was both wide-ranging and supernaturally infused. First of all, there is that wisdom which is numbered first among the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it consists of a supernaturally infused habit by which the created mind discerns and contemplates

divine things with an internal sense; also, it judges accurately the highest and unchanging Good by virtue of participation in its nature, and by the conformity of its affections to that knowledge. And so it is by this wisdom that a person discerns—not with a bare and unformed knowledge, but with formed knowledge and an engaged will—that God alone is to be enjoyed, and that he must devote himself wholly to God and cling to him to the very end. This is what he feels and senses with an internal sensibility. This wisdom cannot be formless; indeed, it is inseparably linked with charity, so that whoever exists in a state of salvation (that is, in charity and grace) has this wisdom to some degree. And the more one grows in charity, the more do they grow in that wisdom. . . .

The second type of supernatural wisdom is the gift and habit of the gift freely given [*gratia gratis data*], by which a person knows and can do those things which pertain to faith—proclaiming, proving, and defending it. As Augustine writes in this connection, “You have faith itself, but you do not have the ability and the resources to defend the faith.”[†] This wisdom can be unformed; that is, it can exist apart from charity and saving grace [*gratia gratum faciente*]; it is common among both the virtuous and the vicious, just like the other freely given gifts. Concerning these, the apostle writes, “To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge.” This wisdom, although given by infusion to the glorious apostles and to many other saints, can nevertheless be obtained by reading, by listening, and by study of the sacred Scriptures and other theological texts; indeed, it is continually learned by students and by the studious. This wisdom was

also infused by grace into Solomon in great abundance. . . .

The third type of wisdom is natural, or philosophical. This kind of wisdom can be found and obtained by natural light and by study, even though it is granted to some by an infusion of grace. And this kind of wisdom is sometimes taken more broadly in reference to all true knowledge that can be acquired and discovered by natural reason. Thus, it comprehends both knowledge [*scientiam*] and prudence [*prudentialiam*]. Sometimes it is taken more strictly for the knowledge of divine and immaterial things. But this wisdom (in the broader sense) seems to have been infused into Solomon to an exceptional degree, such that there has been none greater than him before or after, excepting only Christ and the first-created human (Adam). (Though Jerome says of Aristotle that he was certainly a great miracle among the whole human race, since whatever could be known by nature seems to have been infused into him.[†] Let this be understood in the most pious sense.)

Moreover, the Scripture seems to imply that Solomon was preeminent in all these types of wisdom—in natural knowledge, moral, and rational—all at the same time. For we read in 1 Kings that “God gave to Solomon wisdom, and understanding exceeding much, and greatness of heart, as the sand that is on the sea shore. And the wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the Orientals, and of the Egyptians; and he was wiser than all men. . . . Solomon also spoke three thousand parables, and his poems were five thousand. And he treated about trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; and he spoke of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes.” And again, in the person of Solomon the following is said: “God gave me the true knowledge of things that exist: to know the disposition of the whole world and the virtues of the elements; the beginning and ending, and the middle of times, the alterations of their courses, and the changes of seasons; the revolutions of the year and the dispositions of the stars; the natures of living

creatures and rage of wild beasts; the force of winds and the reasonings of people; the diversities of plants and the virtues of roots.” Since, therefore, Solomon’s wisdom was so great, it is clear that his words contain the highest wisdom and ought to be studied with great diligence. EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.¹

THE PLACE OF PROVERBS IN SOLOMON’S

TRIOLOGY. FRANCIS TAYLOR: Three works there are of Solomon’s in Scripture, arguments of that large wisdom which God gave him resembling his people: the one like the sand on the seashore; the other like the dust of the earth; [the third] that he begged and received. . . . The Proverbs set out true wisdom; Ecclesiastes, worldly vanity; and Canticles, heavenly love. The first teaches us how to live in the world. The second, how to wean us from the world. The third, how to rejoice in the love of Christ. And Solomon varies the title suitably to the occasion. In the beginning of the Proverbs, he writes himself “king of Israel,” that he might teach all his people. In Ecclesiastes he calls himself “king in Jerusalem,” that the people who had seen his vanity there might not imitate it. In the Canticles, he takes no kingly title at all—nothing but bare Solomon: “He is content with his own name, taking no notice that he was a king.”[†] He had no

¹DCCO 7:3-4; citing 1 Kings 3:11-12; Is 11:2; 1 Cor 12:8; 1 Kings 4:29-33; Wis 7:17-20. [†]A loose paraphrase of the following passage in Augustine’s *Sermon* 240: “Those who know how to defend this case are more learned than the rest, not more faithful. They have faith, they have the ability to defend the faith. Others lack this ability and the resources and learning to defend the faith, but have the faith itself” (240.1; PL 38:1151; WSA 3.7:65). Denis is using this passage as warrant for the scholastic distinction between saving grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) and the spiritual gifts that God bestows according to his own counsel (*gratia gratis data*). [‡]The source of the quotation is obscure. Maarten Hoenen notes a parallel citation in another work of Denis (*Epistola de cursu puerorum*), suggesting that it may be an allusion to Jerome’s *Commentary on Jonah*, cap. (s. s.) 3, 6/9 (CCSL 76:408), though Hoenen also observes that the wording more closely resembles a passage in Averroes (*In de anima* 3, comm. 14). Hoenen, “Denys the Carthusian and Heymeric de Campo on the Pilgrimages of Children to Mont-Saint-Michel,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 61 (1994): 387-418.

title to Christ's love as a king. Every good subject of his had as much title to it as he. AN EXPOSITION WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.²

WHAT IS A PROVERB? DESIDERIUS ERASMUS:

There are two things that are peculiar to the character of a proverb: common usage and novelty. This means that it must be well known and in popular currency; for this is the origin of the word *paroimia* in Greek (from *oimos*, a road, as though well-polished in use and circulating), that which travels everywhere on the lips of men and women, and of *adagium* in Latin, as if you should say "something passed round," following Varro. And then it must be shrewd, so as to have some mark, as it were, to distinguish it from ordinary talk. But we cannot immediately rank in this category everything that has passed into popular speech or contains an unusual image; it must be recommended by its antiquity and erudition alike, for that is what I call shrewd.

Proverbs get into popular speech, either from the oracles of the gods, like "Neither the third nor the fourth,"[†] or from the sayings of sages, which indeed circulated in antiquity as if they were oracles, such as "Good things are difficult."[‡] Or else they come from some very ancient poet, as for instance Homer's "When a thing is done, a fool can see it,"[§] or Pindar's "To kick against the goad,"[◇] or from Sappho, "No bees, no honey";[△] for at a time when tongues were as yet uncorrupted, the verses of the poets were also sung at feasts. Or they may come from the stage—that is, from tragedies and comedies, like this from Euripides: "Upwards flow the streams,"^{††} or this from Aristophanes: "Off with you to the crows!"^{‡‡} It is comedy especially which by a mutual give-and-take, adopts many of the expressions in constant use among the common people, and in turn gives birth to others that are passed on to them for constant use. Some are derived from the subjects of legend, such as the

great jar that cannot be filled from the story of the daughters of Danaus,^{§§} or the helmet of Orcus from the tale of Perseus.^{◇◇} Some arise from fables, among which we find "But we see not what is in the wallet behind."^{△△} Occasionally they are born from an actual occurrence: "Leucon carries some things; his ass carries others."^{†††} Several are borrowed from history: "Rome wins by sitting still."^{†††} Others come from apothegms—that is, from quick witty replies, like that remark "Who does not own himself would Samos own."^{§§§} There are some that are snatched from a word rashly spoken, such as "Hippocleides doesn't care."^{◇◇◇} In a word, the behavior, the natural qualities of any race or individual or even of an animal, or last, any power belonging even to a thing, if remarkable and commonly known—all these have given occasion for an adage. . . .

Now in case anyone should impatiently thrust aside this aspect of learning as too humble, perfectly easy and almost childish, I will explain in a few words how much respect was earned by these apparent trivialities among the ancients. . . . To start with, that an acquaintance with adages was held to be not unimportant by the greatest men is sufficiently proved, I think, by the fact that authors of the first distinction have thought them a worthy subject for a number of volumes diligently compiled. . . . But why should I be talking of these people, when the Hebrew sages themselves did not hesitate to bring out more than one book with this title, and to enclose the venerable mysteries of the unsearchable deity in proverbs which the intellects of so many and such great theologians have struggled to elucidate, as they are struggling to this day? . . .

Then who would dare to despise this mode of speech, when they saw that some of the oracles of the holy prophets are made of proverbs? One example of this is "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Who would not revere them as an almost holy thing, fit to express the mysteries of religion, since Christ himself, whom we ought to imitate in all things, seems to have taken a particular delight in

²Taylor, *An Exposition with Practicall Observations upon the First Three Chapters of the Proverbs*, 1-2; citing 1 Kings 4:29; 2 Chron 1:9-12; Eccles 1:1; Song 1:1. Jerome, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (PL 23:1013).

this way of speaking? An adage is current in Greek: “I judge the tree by its fruit.”^{ΔΔΔ} In Luke we read the same thing: “A good tree does not bear corrupt fruit, neither does a corrupt tree bear good fruit.” . . . Christ cites a proverb from children playing in the marketplace: “We have piped to you and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and you have not wept.” This is very like that saying in Theognis, if one may compare sacred with profane: “For Jove himself may not content us all, / Whether he holds rain back or lets it fall.”⁺⁺⁺⁺ ADAGES.³

³CWE 34:4-5, 9-10, 13*; citing Jer 31:29; Lk 6:43; Mt 11:17. ^{ΔΔΔ}The Megarians are neither the third nor the fourth.” Erasmus explains, “This used to be said in old days of exceptionally idle and worthless people who had no claims to respect at all.” *Adagia* 2.1.79 (CWE 33:61). ^ΔPlato, *Cratylus* 384b; *Adagia* 2.1.12. ^ΔHomer, *Iliad* 17.31-2; 20.197-98; *Adagia* 1.1.30. ^ΔTerence, *Phormio* 77-78; *Adagia* 1.3.46. Oddly, Erasmus omits mention of the fact that Paul reports a voice from heaven speaking these words in Aramaic in Acts 26:14. ^ΔDiogenianus, *Paroemiographi Graeci* 6.58; *Adagia* 1.6.62. ^ΔEuripides, *Medea* 410-13; *Adagia* 1.3.15. ^ΔAristophanes, *Nubes* 133, *Plutus* 394, 604; *Adagia* 2.1.96. ^Δ“He draws water from a sieve”: Plautus, *Pseudolus* 102; *Adagia* 1.4.60. ^ΔZenobius, 1.41; *Adagia* 2.10.74. ^{ΔΔ}“The proverb,” Erasmus explains, “took its rise from one of Aesop’s fables, which is told as follows by Stobaeus: Aesop said that each of us carries two wallets, one in front and the other behind hanging from our shoulders; and in the front one we put what other men do wrong and our own failings into the back one.” *Adagia* 1.6.90 (CWE 33:59). ^{ΔΔΔ}Zenobius, 1.74; Diogenianus, *Paroemiographi Graeci* 2.21; *Adagia* 2.2.86. ^{ΔΔΔ}Varro, *De re rustica* 1.2.2; *Adagia* 1.10.29. ^{ΔΔΔ}“This will suit people who demand something outrageous, or who concern themselves with details and neglect the larger issues. Derived from an anecdote preserved by Plutarch in his ‘Sayings of Spartans.’ When the Athenians had surrendered their city to the victor, they asked that he should at least let them keep Samos, and his reply took the form ‘When you are not your own masters, do you expect to master other men?’ Plutarch, *Moralia* 233D; *Adagia* 1.7.83 (CWE 33:117). ^{ΔΔΔ}“This adage was used to convey that they were neglecting something and not greatly concerned. It is derived from a story told at some length by Herodotus in the *Erato*. To put it briefly, this Hippocleides was a son of Teisander, who along with many other young men sought the hand of a daughter of Cleisthenes of Sicyon. Cleisthenes tested the suitors for a whole year, during which there was a party at which Hippocleides gave an unseemly exhibition by dancing on his hands with his feet in the air. The father took great offence at the young man’s improper levity, and said, ‘Son of Teisander, you have danced yourself out of your marriage.’ To which he promptly replied, ‘Hippocleides doesn’t care’; and the remark, as Herodotus tells us, passed into a proverb.” Zenobius, 5.31; Diogenianus, *Paroemiographi Graeci* 7.21; *Adagia* 1.10.12 (CWE 33:239).

THEOLOGY IN LOWLY FORM. KONRAD PELLIKAN: Proverbs, or comparisons [*similitudines*], which are called parables in Greek, are not the same as adages, which are commonly repeated aphorisms [*sententiae*] enveloped in a comparison—that is, they signify something different from what they say.[†] Rather, they are discourses [*sermones*] and pregnant aphorisms [*sententiae*] conducive to every aspect of faithful living. Though wrapped in lowly form, they contain within themselves much that is of use, such as certain first principles of genuine theology, of which we can make use in understanding the common topics of faith and ethics, as well the whole of sacred Scripture. A SUCCINCT AND UNIVERSAL COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE.⁴

SOLOMON’S WISDOM EXCELS THAT OF THE PAGANS. PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: Regarding the two modes of speaking, it is customary on the one hand for the dialectical method to proceed in an orderly manner, rendering a universal doctrine much the same way one might erect a building. Or, for example, the way a doctor first speaks concerning the structure of the body, distinguishing its members from its fluids, then moving on to a discussion of birth and the causes of diseases, and finally to speak of treatments. The other mode of speaking involves delivering brief opinions in the form of aphorisms, and it often happens that these are given indiscriminately, with no great concern for order, as for example in the moral precepts given by Phocylides, Theognis, and others. This book by Solomon is a collection of such aphorisms [*sententiae*], and its Latin title is *Proverbia*, though there is a distinction in Greek

^{ΔΔΔ}Diogenianus, *Paroemiographi Graeci* 5.15; *Adagia* 1.9.39. ^{ΔΔΔ}“The adage, drawn from the quoted lines in Theognis, is, “Even Jupiter does not please everybody.” *Adagia* 2.7.55 (CWE 20:27).

[†]Pellikan, *Commentaria bibliorum et illa brevia quidem ac catholica*, 198v. [†]In his introduction to the *Adagia*, Erasmus considered the definition of a proverb among several Greek authorities as “a manner of speaking which wraps up in obscurity an obvious truth” (CWE 31:3). Although allowing that some proverbs have such “allegorical” character, he rejected the definition as too narrow.

between aphorisms [*gnōmas*] and proverbs [*paroimias*], and also in Latin between *sententiae* and *proverbia*; in Hebrew this is signified by a variety of terms.

An aphorism [*sententia*], or *gnome*, is a brief saying containing a moral precept, or a warning concerning reward and punishment, or a description of good fortune in life, consideration of which is a useful reminder. Examples of such aphorisms are: “Scorn voluptuousness, for cheap pleasures are bought with pain.”[†] Or “Remember to disbelieve.”[‡] Or “Know thyself.”[§] Of rewards and punishments: “Good things come to the children of the pious, not to those of the impious.”[¶] Of good fortune: “Pride often runs riot in prosperity.”^Δ Or “Fortune makes fools of her favorites.”^{††}

A proverb, however, is a widely celebrated saying and generally involves some sort of figure of speech, whether a metaphor, or comparison, or imagery, or hyperbole, or irony signifying something else, whether it contains an aphorism [*sententia*] or some other kind of description. For example: “A leaky jar.”^{†††} Or “Until the Greek calends.”^{§§} Or “He is going to the crows.”^{¶¶} Or “An ever-shifting channel.”^{ΔΔ} These and many other proverbs communicate no aphorism [*sententia*], but they are adapted to signify different things in different circumstances.

Even though there is a distinction between proverbs and aphorisms, many proverbs contain the latter—for example, “You have obtained Sparta; now adorn it.”^{†††} This is an aphorism, reminding each individual of their own vocation (as we call it): let them understand what is contained within its limits and rightly perform the duties required of them. But it is also a proverb, because it is adorned by a figure and widely known. “We do not see the knapsack on our own back.”^{†††} This is an aphorism reprehending an evil self-love that judges others harshly. But it is also a proverb, because it is communicated in figurative terms and is widely known. The following are aphorisms and proverbs: “The censor pardons the crows and convicts the doves.”^{§§§} “Tortoises conquer both virtue and wisdom.”^{¶¶¶}

With so many sayings in this book that are both aphorisms and proverbs, the title of Proverbs is not a bad fit; however, whether the title be aphorisms or proverbs, it must still be known that this is a collected treasury of the sweetest aphorisms, which are precepts concerning all the virtues.^{ΔΔΔ}

But we ought always to bear in mind that the chief summary of teaching on the virtues, adapted for our comprehension, is contained in the Decalogue. Here also [in Proverbs] is taught what must be done, and the various types of maxims may be divided up in accordance with the commandments of the Decalogue. These types can be given as follows: some are theological, and these address matters concerning God and the precepts of the first table; others are political, addressing the duties of governance; others are ethical, giving instruction on mores common to everyone; still others are economic, speaking on matters of marriage and domestic affairs. . . .

But it is necessary even at the outset to be reminded that there is a great difference between the pagan *gnomologias*—for example, of Phocylides or Theognis—and those handed down by Solomon in the church of God, just as there is said to be a difference in kind between philosophy and the teaching which resounds in the church. Even as philosophy retains a fragment of the law, so also Phocylides says something about the wrath of God and the penalties of crime. But concerning the Mediator, the remission of sins, reconciliation, true prayer, faith and hope, the nearness of God in our calamities, he says nothing, even though he recites many precepts pertaining to the second table of the Decalogue. But Solomon often addresses the true knowledge of God and how to approach him, as well as the other virtues pertaining to the first table of the law; for example: “the beginning of wisdom of is the fear of the Lord.” And: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own wisdom, in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths.” Concerning the cross: “The Lord chastises the one he loves, that he not fall away from him.” And

concerning salvation after this life: “The righteous hopes in his death.”

The emperor Julian rated Phocylides higher than Solomon when he argued that there was no greater wisdom handed down in the prophetic and apostolic books than what could be found among the pagans.^{****} Now Cyril points out in refutation of Julian that Solomon is greatly to be preferred [to the pagans] because he preceded them by an age. For Phocylides, who was from Miletus, and Theognis, who was from Megara, lived in the age of Cyrus and Thales. But this puerile response does not satisfy an argument of this gravity. For he should have spoken instead about the true sources of their teaching, whether it be the doctrine of the law or that of the gospel. Granted that Phocylides recited a good part of the law, but of that teaching which is unique to the church—namely, those teachings concerning the revelation of God, both in deed and in testimony, concerning the great promises which make up the gospel, announcing the remission of sins and offering eternal life on account of the Son, or concerning the consolation in the cross—on these high matters the pagan scribes are silent. This difference must always be kept in view, so that we know the doctrine which is unique to the church.

This also must be added by way of preface: because this book was written for the true church of God, in which the promise of the Messiah was known, we recognize him and desire that, with faith lighting the way, we may contemplate the Messiah by experience in every aphorism, whether it speaks of faith or of works. For example, when in chapter 3 it says, “Trust in the Lord with your whole heart,” understand “on account of the Mediator;” just as David himself had previously pointed out: “Kiss the Son. . . . Blessed are all who trust in him.” Indeed, Solomon expressly commands that this teaching, which was given by God to this people, be embraced. And where mention is made of faith, it is necessary to contemplate the promises. Likewise when it speaks concerning marriage: “Rejoice in the wife of your youth,” understand (with faith lighting the way) that the

statutes are accepted by God on account of the Mediator, and on account of him are works divinely ordained pleasing to God. Thus the teaching concerning the Messiah is to be grasped everywhere, though it is delivered with greater clarity in the Psalms and Prophets. But indeed, it is indicated here also, because mention is made of the wisdom of God proclaimed in human fashion, which is the Son sent to the church. EXPOSITION OF THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.⁵

⁵CR 14:1-6; citing Prov 9:10; 3:5-6; 3:12; 14:32; 3:5; Ps 2:12; Prov 5:18. ¹Horace, *Epistle* 1.2.55. ²Lucian, *Hermotimus* 47.23. This proverb—“not mine, it comes from one of the sages”—is followed in the text of Lucian’s play by the following explanation: “For if we are not prepared to believe everything we hear, but rather to act like judges and let the next man have his say, perhaps we may escape the labyrinths with ease.” (LCL 430:350-51). ³An ancient Greek aphorism attributed to various sources, including Socrates. ⁴Theocritus, *Idyll* 26.32. ⁵Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 2.437. ⁶Publius Syrus, *Sententia* 203. ⁷Melanchthon appears to be quoting Erasmus’s Latin version of Diogenianus’s Greek proverb, one that carries two meanings. As Erasmus explains, “The first of these is used of the greedy and rapacious. The second refers to those who are very forgetful; every piece of learning that is poured into them immediately flows away. The same myth is also the origin of the saying that even today continues to be in common use: to draw water with a sieve” (CWE 30:221). ⁸Suetonius wrote of Caesar Augustus that “when he wished to indicate that certain men will never pay, [he said] that ‘they will pay on the Greek Kalends.’” *Divus Augustus* 87.1. The Greeks did not divide their year into kalends. ⁹The origin of this expression is obscure, but it seems to be the equivalent of “going to the dogs.” ¹⁰Another obscure image, but Cicero uses similar language in describing the unstable whims of the voting public: “What sea, what channel (*euripo*) do you think exists, which is liable to such commotions—to such great and various agitations of waves, as the storms and tides by which the public is influenced?” *Ad Murena* 17.35, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. Yonge (London: Bohn, 1856). Whatever the origin, the image clearly refers to an unstable person. ¹¹Versions of this saying can be found in Cicero (*Epistulae ad Atticum* 4.6.2) and Plutarch (*Moralia* 602b). In Erasmus’s commentary (n^o1401), this adage is an exhortation to rulers to content themselves with their own lands and apply themselves diligently to the task of governing. ¹²Catullus, *Carmina* 22.21. ¹³Juvenal, *Satires* 2.63. The censor was an ancient Roman office wielding judicial authority—unjustly, in the satirist’s view. ¹⁴Julius Pollux, *Onomasticon* 8.74.6. The proverb is also found in the writings of one of the early desert fathers, Arsenius the Great (*Apophthegmata* 12.31b), who explains that “the ancients would also stamp a tortoise on coins; whence the expression, ‘Tortoises conquer virtue and wisdom.’” I am grateful to my colleague Eunice Kim for help with the translation of this passage from the Doric dialect. ¹⁵Melanchthon had titled an earlier edition of his commentary *Sententiae*, or “maxims,” but in

HEAVENLY WISDOM TEACHING CHRIST.

MICHEL COP: Although we are not kings or worldly princes, nor do we have public office, yet we ought to follow the wisdom of good kings and princes, as they are given to us by God for an example. And even though we do not always have wise superiors, as experience teaches us, we still need at all times to be wise, unless we want to perish with the foolish. For neither the folly of the great nor that of the small will be excused from guilt of damnation, if we follow it and delight in it. And for this reason, Solomon was not only content to be a mirror of wisdom to those of his own time, but he also desired to be a profit to all ages, so long as the world should last, and so he has written these notable proverbs and excellent sayings, profitable to teach one to govern oneself wisely in all holiness and honesty, in all righteousness and innocence, in all modesty and sobriety, in the faith and fear of God, as it will be understood by those who hear and read them. . . .

Therefore we must be neither deaf nor negligent, but ready and diligent to hear the Proverbs of King Solomon, in which he promises above all to teach us wisdom—not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, which passes away. Such wisdom is foolishness before God, who gave Solomon the wisdom that he teaches in these proverbs. If we learn them truly, and delight in what they teach, we shall be endowed with heavenly wisdom. This wisdom has always been one and the same, so let us not think that Solomon here teaches anything new, for it is said, “You shall neither add anything to what I command you, nor take anything away.” The wisdom he teaches here is simply this: to hold fast to the word of God, and to

walk in his commandments. This is the same wisdom Moses taught the children of Israel, saying, “Behold, I have taught you laws and ordinances, as the Lord my God commanded me.”

But here it might be objected that Solomon need not have written, seeing that Moses had before him already written and that he is teaching no different wisdom but what Moses taught. It may be answered that what Moses taught briefly and obscurely, adapted for the capacity of the people, Solomon expands upon and amplifies, and so in this way he serves as an interpreter to Moses. But it may be objected again that if Solomon teaches no other wisdom than what Moses taught, he does not teach Jesus Christ, whom God has made for us wisdom and righteousness; therefore his teaching does not apply to us, who should aspire to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. I answer that Moses has indeed spoken of Jesus Christ: “If you had believed Moses, you would also have believed me.” And “The law was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ.”

But Solomon does not merely teach the law but faith as well, for he sets forth for us various promises of God, and then teaches us Jesus Christ, of whom he also was a figure, for all the promises of God are “yes” and “amen” in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we hear the Proverbs of Solomon, let us not expect that he will lead us only to perform the works of the law outwardly, but that he primarily intends to conform our character to the fear and reverence of God, and this cannot be done without faith. ON THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.⁶

NO DISCERNABLE PATTERN. PETER MOFFETT: Proverbs are certain general, short, and pithy sayings, used, or [intended] to be used, in every person’s mouth. Even though various parables are set down in the writings of the prophets, the evangelists, and the apostles, yet this is the only

the final edition he reverted to the more traditional title of *Proverbiorum*. Here he seems to be reminding the reader that no matter the title, the content is the same. ^{***}See the commentary on Prov 5:18-19. ^{****}“Is their [that is, the Christians] ‘wisest’ man Solomon at all comparable with Phocylides or Theognis or Isocrates among the Hellenes? Certainly not. At least, if one were to compare the exhortations of Isocrates with Solomon’s proverbs, you would I am very sure, find that the son of Theodorus is superior to their ‘wisest’ king.” Julian, *Against the Galileans* 224c (LCL 157:383).

⁶Cop, *Sur les Proverbes de Salomon*, 1-2; citing 1 Cor 2:6; Deut 4:2; 4:5; 1 Cor 2:2; Jn 5:46; Gal 3:24; 2 Cor 1:20.

book of Scripture titled by the name of Proverbs, because in it alone proverbial sentences are continued without ceasing or intermission, and without mingling of stories, prayers, or other matters. For in this little volume a great heap of grave and most prudent sayings is so nearly couched and so briefly comprised, such that proverbs, like drifts of snow, seem to lie thick together and, like grapes of the same bunch, to cluster one upon another. As concerning the arrangement of this book, neither are the proverbs so confusedly shuffled but that some of them, now and then, have affinity and coherence together; nor yet are they so suitably sorted but that even those often that are placed as very near neighbors differ greatly in substance, and have no dependence upon one another. A COMMENTARY UPON THE BOOK OF THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.⁷

A COLLECTION MADE BY ROYAL DECREE.

HUGO GROTIUS: In Greek this book is called *Paroimíai*, though the Hebrew title, *meshal*, signifies in particular a comparison or a parable. But since Proverbs is full of such compact

comparisons, eventually the term came to be used for all *gnômē*, or pithy sayings. I will not repeat here what I said about this in my prologue to Stobaeus's *Sayings of the Poets*, or in my comments on Matthew 13:3.[†] But it seems that this book is a selection of the best sayings from many different writers who preceded Solomon, in much the same way that many of the emperors of Constantinople had anthologies drawn up for their own use. But all the sayings collected here are about ethics—that is, they relate either to character or to instruction in prudence, but always in relation to the worship of God, for this virtue begets all the rest of itself. Having been neglected by many nations, this was the special study of the Hebrew sages, as Josephus has observed.[‡] ANNOTATIONS ON THE OLD TESTAMENT.⁸

⁷Moffett, *A Commentary upon the Book of the Proverbs of Solomon*, 2*.

⁸Grotius, *Annotationes in Vetus Testamentum*, 247. [†]Ioannes Stobaeus (John of Stobi) was a fifth-century Greek writer who compiled a massive collection, *Selections, Sayings, and Admonitions*, culled from the writings of more than five hundred ancient Greek writers, from Homer to Themistius. In 1623, Grotius published a partial translation of Stobaeus into Latin, the *Dicta Poetarum*, to which he refers the reader here. [‡]The reference is uncertain, but the treatise *Against Apion* argues a similar point (see esp. 2.17-18).

BUY THE BOOK!

ivpress.com/proverbs-ecclesiastes-song-of-songs-rs