The book of Proverbs is the starting point of the biblical wisdom tradition. But how did individual proverbs, instructions and poems come together to form the various collections we have today? Katharine Dell explores the possible social contexts for this varied material in the royal court, wisdom schools and popular culture. She draws shrewdly on materials from the wisdom traditions of the ancient Near East, in particular Egypt, in order to bolster and enhance her theories. She argues that Proverbs had a theological purpose from its conception, with God’s creativity being an integral theme of the text rather than one added in later redactions. Dell also shows that echoes of other Old Testament genres such as prophecy, law and cult can be found in Proverbs, notably in chapters 1–9, and that its social and theological context is much broader than scholars have recognized in the past.

Katharine J. Dell is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge. Her publications include The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature (1991); Get Wisdom, Get Insight: An Introduction to Israel’s Wisdom Literature (2000), and Seeking a Life that Matters: Wisdom for Today from the Book of Proverbs (2002).
THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IN SOCIAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

KATHARINE J. DELL
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Preface

This book on Proverbs has taken shape (and changed shape) over a number of years, and I have used some of my earlier ideas for a more ambitious project in articles that link up with the ideas represented here. Early work on this material was done at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, during a sabbatical there, and my thanks go to Donn Morgan, in particular, for making me so welcome and exchanging many ideas about wisdom over lunch. I am grateful to the University of Cambridge for sabbatical terms and summer vacations in which I have completed this work. I am particularly grateful to Cambridge University Press for giving me extended time on which to work on this book and for their patience in my delay in producing a final manuscript. During the time of writing this book I have both got married and had a child, and it is to my husband, Douglas Kinnear Hamilton, and to our son, James David Kinnear Hamilton (born 4 February 2003), that I dedicate this book with love.

KATHARINE J. DELL
Cambridge, April 2005
Abbreviations

AB  Analecta Biblica
AOAT  Alter Orient und Altes Testament
BETL  Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BHT  Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BKAT  Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BS  Bibliotheca Sacra
BTB  Biblical Theology Bulletin
BZAW  Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CB  Coniectanea Biblica
CBQ  Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBQMS  Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
DLZ  Deutsche Literaturzeitung für Kritik der Internationalen Wissenschaft
EJ  Encyclopaedia Judaica
EQ  Evangelical Quarterly
ET  English translation
EvTh  Evangelische Theologie
FAT  Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FTS  Freiburger Theologische Studien
HAT  Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBT  Horizons in Biblical Theology
HUCA  Hebrew Union College Annual
IDB  Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible
ICC  International Critical Commentary
IOSOT  International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament
### List of abbreviations

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<td>JAAR</td>
<td>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</td>
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<td>JAARS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Supplement Series</td>
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<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
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<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<td>JBR</td>
<td>Journal of the Bible and Religion</td>
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<td>JNES</td>
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<td>NF</td>
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<td>PTMS</td>
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<td>RB</td>
<td>Revue Biblique</td>
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<td>RHPhR</td>
<td>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</td>
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<td>SPAW</td>
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<td>TB</td>
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<td>WMANT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</td>
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