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978-0-521-12106-4 - The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context

Katharine J. Dell

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THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IN SOCIAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

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).

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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

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

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<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JAARS	Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Supplement Series
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBR</i>	<i>Journal of the Bible and Religion</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNWSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
NF	Neue Folge
NS	New Series
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studien</i>
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RHPbR</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</i>
SBL (DS)	Society of Biblical Literature (Dissertation Series)
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SPAW	Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TBAT	Theologische Bücherei, Altes Testament
<i>Trudy</i>	<i>Transactions of the 25th International Congress of Orientalists</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTS	Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series

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List of abbreviations

WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZÄS	<i>Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZB	Züricher Bibelkommentare
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>