“Reality on earth is here to stay gray.”
Faculty Conference, January 2015

“The real trouble with this world of ours is not that it is an unreasonable world, nor even that it is a reasonable one. The commonest kind of trouble is that it is nearly reasonable, but not quite. Life is not an illogicality; yet it is a trap for logicians.”

I. Proverbs
A. Retribution in Proverbs
B. Scripture

“Misfortune pursues sinners, but the righteous are well rewarded.” JPS (13:21)

“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord loves him whom he loves as a father the son in whom he delights.” (3:11-12).

II. Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth
A. Role of the epilogue
B. Meaning of havel (“absurd”), together with other phrases

הבל הבולמ عمر קהלת
 Completely senseless!, says Qoheleth

הבל הבולמ הבול
 Completely senseless!, all is absurdity.

(My translation, 1:2)

Scriptures

2:12-24 (ESV)

1:17 — “Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly....
“So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly....” (12a)
vv. 13-17, unpacks this:

“13) Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness 14) The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And Yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.[an apparent contradiction] 15) Then I said in my heart, ‘What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?’ And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. 16) For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! 17) So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.”

Go back now to 12b,

1 G.K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy, 81.
12b reflects on the successor

“For what can the man do who comes after the king?”

vv. 18-23 unpacks this:

18) I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and 19) who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. 20) So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, 21) because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22) What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? 23) For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity. 24) There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil.”

8:14-17 (ESV)

Vv. 12-13 first.

“12) Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. 13) But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.”

“14) There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said this also is vanity. 15) And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun. 16) When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one’s eyes see sleep, 17) then I saw all the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.”

III. Job

A. Prologue
B. Body
   1. Series of buildups with “friends”
   2. Elihu
   3. Theophanies
      a. Round one (38:1-40:5)

In the first round we get a test of Job’s noetic/mental power.

1) The Lord’s challenge (38:1-39:30)
2) Job’s submission (40:1-6)
   b. Round two (40:6-42:6)

   In the second round we get a test of Job’s dynamic power.
   1) The Lord’s challenge (40:7-41:34)
   2) Job’s submission (42:1-6)

C. Conclusion

   “Therefore I retract and change my mind, being but dust and ashes” R. Murphy
   “Therefore, I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes.” JPS Tanak translation.

Brief Bibliography on Wisdom literature, slightly annotated (* = easier, ** = expensive)

Adams, Wisdom in Transition (Brill).** A very helpful book on retribution.


Camp, Claudia. Wisdom and the Feminine (great on personification, a student of Murphy’s). It is heavy on Feminism, but there are some real nuggets to be mined here.


Enns, P. Ecclesiastes (Two Horizons Commentary; Eerdmans, 2011). Very good recent commentary.

Fox, Michael V. Proverbs (2 parts in the Anchor Bible Series). Probably the best technical commentary.


Goldsworthy, Graeme. Gospel and Wisdom (1987), is good for getting the creative juices going in thinking about wisdom and Christ. He has a very different view of Christianity and culture than Professor VanDrunen.
Jones, Hywel R. *Job. Evangelical Study Commentary* (Evangelical Press, 2007).*


Kline, M.G. *Structure of Biblical Authority* (pp. 64-66). These pages address wisdom.

“Wycliffe Bible Commentary on Job” by M.G. Kline & “Trial by Ordeal” article in festschrift for Hughes.*

M.M. Kline has two articles in *Kerux* on Ecclesiastes. One is a review of T. Longman and another more recent article on Ecclesiastes. MM challenges evangelical interpretations in helpful ways.


Kidner, “Voices in Counterpoint,” in *Introduction to Wisdom Literature, The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job, and Eccles’s* (IVP, 1985) is very important for how the wisdom books relate to each other.*

Longman, Tremper. *How to Read Proverbs*. A popular little book by IVP. As always, Tremper is clear and popular.*


Murphy, Roland. *The Tree of Life* (Eerdmans, make sure and get the latest edition). Great introduction to wisdom from the former doyen of wisdom studies with full bibliographical references.


Schoors, Antoon. *Ecclesiastes*. (Peeters, 2013). Most important recent commentary. Lots of history of exegesis. This is a very important scholarly series for every biblical book published so far.**


Whybrey, *Modern Study of Proverbs* (Brill also) If you want to see what the academy is saying about Proverbs, this is the book to peruse.**

Waltke, Bruce. 2 part commentary on Proverbs. He redid the NICOT series for Eerdmans.
