

Chapter Three

Solomon—His Actions and Books: Prefiguration, Typology, and His Teachings

*Thou may well see it reason
For as the wise Solomon
in his proverbs bears witness
that gold, treasure, and great riches
a good name doth well all surmount
who that last aright account.*

Guillaume de Deguileville, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* (1330, 1335)²⁸⁸

Though Solomon did not figure in the genealogy of Jesus, he was nonetheless regarded as a prefiguration of the Christian Messiah. Despite Solomon's negative image as a sinner, the three books attributed to him were a rich source of allegorical readings that treated them as a *demonstratio evangelica* of both the coming of the Messiah and of the Church itself. Such readings resulted from the Christian view of the Old Testament as a Christian asset, the correct interpretation and true meaning of which only the New Testament could supply.²⁸⁹ This implies that without the Old Testament there is no New Testament. This perception spawned a polemic and a sense of competition concerning the rightful owners, and the true interpreters, of the Bible.²⁹⁰

From a Christian point of view, the historical role of the Jewish people was merely to preserve the Bible for the Christians until they appeared—in other words, to act as *custodes librorum nostrorum*. Augustine formulated this

288 Lines 15407–15412. Translated by John Lydgate (1426), edited by Furnivall, Millwood, New York, 1975. See S. K. Hagen (1990).

289 See, for example Barrett (1963); Chadwick (1963); and J. N. D. Kelly (1963). More recently, see Kalimi (2017). It is unfortunately not possible to include herein a thorough discussion of the “internal” rabbinic-Karaite polemic and its influence on rabbinical interpretations of the Bible.

290 Justin Martyr accuses the Jew Tryphon of being “ignorant of Scripture”, and Tryphon casts the same accusation at Aquila. We should bear in mind that the Evangelists and the early Church Fathers based their arguments on the Septuagint and accepted the legend that that translation was divinely inspired; as a result, at times they were misled—or erred—in understanding the text. Thus, for example, the word “alma” (עלמה) in Isaiah 7:14 was translated as “*parthenos*”, “virgin”. On this matter, see Benoit (1974); and Rokeah (2012). Luther wrote that the Jews were robbed of a proper understanding of Scripture because they read the Bible according to the *midrash* and rabbinic commentary and not according to its literal meaning, and that they “use all of these books to blaspheme the son of God” (Luther 2015, pp. 91, 93).

dogma in the following way: “In the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed” (*Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet*).²⁹¹ The Byzantine Emperor Justinian’s *Novella 146* (issued in 553)²⁹² described Jews as adhering to a denuded, literal interpretation of the Bible because they did not believe in the final judgment of Jesus, in the resurrection, or in the creation of the angels. Thus, they were unable to comprehend the spiritual meaning of God’s words²⁹³—i. e., the “correct”, Christian way of reading the Bible, which made use of typological, symbolic, and allegorical interpretation.²⁹⁴ According to Thomas Aquinas, “certain things *de Christo* are prefigured in the Old Testament through, e. g. David or Solomon, the Old Testament is a *figura* of the New Testament and the Church, and the Church is a *figura* of heaven”²⁹⁵—hence Christianity’s claim of figurative validity. In any case, Justinian’s above-mentioned *Novella* was aimed against those who sought the exclusive use of Hebrew and allows the liturgical reading “in all the other languages, changing language and reading according to the different places... there shall be no license to the commentators they have, who employ the Hebrew language to falsify it at their will...”; the reasoning was that Jews’ knowledge of Hebrew would allow them an advantage in interpretation.²⁹⁶ In doing so, Justinian interferes in an inter-Jewish *Kulturkampf* where radicals want to impose the Hebrew reading even in the diaspora.

Jewish and Christian exegetes read the Bible in similar ways, “rambling” through it, separating verses from their literal meaning and historical context (while simultaneously accepting the historicity of characters and events), and combining verses originally far apart in terms of time, location, and substance,

291 See Bright (1999); K. Hagen (1974, p. 39); Cohen (1999, pp. 36–51).

292 *Novella 146*, 553. See de Lange (2017); Linder (1987, pp. 402–411).

293 See Schmeling. A lengthy discussion of Augustine on this subject may be found in *Contra Faustum*; Rutgers (2009, pp. 37–77).

294 In the fourth century, the dogma of John Cassian (c.360–435) was broadly accepted, and was summed up by Nicholas of Lyre: “*Littera gesta docet* [The letter teaches how one should act]; *Quid credas allegoria* [allegory, what one should believe]; *Moralis quid agas* [morals, what one should do]; *Quo tendas anagogia* [anagogy, whither one should strive]”, thus assigning four meanings to the Scriptures: literal, allegorical, typological, and anagogic. Celsus pointed out the dualism (or internal contradiction) within Christian allegory when he wrote that Christians adopted the Biblical cosmogony and, by means of typological allegory, attempted to conceal their denial of Mosaic laws (6:29). Origen (1965, pp. 344–345). See also Guibert of Nogent (shortly before 1083), quoted in Minnis (2009, p. 34). In any event, the issue of the correct way to understand the Old Testament was controversial within both Judaism and Christianity. Young (2002, pp.189–192).

295 See K. Hagen (1974, pp. 47–48).

296 See Parkes (1934, pp. 392–393), and Rutgers (2009, pp. 67–77).

imbuing them in this manner with new meaning. Their selection and combination of verses were not undertaken randomly. An exegete had predefined goals; he searched out—and found—those verses that suited and affirmed his goals. Thus, while Jewish and Christian exegetes read the same verses, they used them to support entirely different meanings.²⁹⁷

Medieval Christian polemicists, who encountered mainly Jewish *midrashim*, scarcely understood the hermeneutical techniques or meanings that Jewish *Midrashic* literature employed up to the end of the seventh century (ninth, if we include texts like *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* or *Seder Eliyahu*); these were fundamentally different from the hermeneutical techniques of Christian biblical commentators and theologians.²⁹⁸ At any rate, the prodigious amount of writing devoted to interpretations and allegorizations of Solomon's life and, even more so, of the books said to be his, testify to his central place in the correspondence that took place between Christianity and Judaism over the centuries.

The first Christian allegorist was Origen. Lawson writes that he was “the first Christian scholar to systematize allegorical interpretations of Scripture based on the mystic concept that it has a visible and invisible element and that in the invisible it has hidden meaning and has a soul”.²⁹⁹ Based on this belief, Christian allegorical readings accorded Solomon the status of a *praefiguratio*—a presaging of Jesus; sections of Solomon's biography were thus subject to typological, symbolic, and allegorical interpretation. The kings of many nations who traveled to Jerusalem to hear Solomon's wisdom prefigured and symbolized the ultimate Day of Judgment and Jesus' universal, atemporal message. Isidore, Archbishop of Seville, found that by constructing the First Temple, Solomon “prefigures the image of Christ who raised the house of God in the heavenly Jerusalem, not with stone and wood, but with all the saints”.³⁰⁰ *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (The Mirror of Human Salvation), a work of popular late-medieval theology, stated that Solomon enthroned was an image of Christ seated in the Virgin's

297 Modern commentators and exegetes continue in this manner and interpret ancient *midrashim* considering their own views and modern concepts, and, in this way, endow them with new meaning.

298 On this point I have learned a great deal from the insights of Daniel Boyarin's *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Boyarin 1990).

299 Origen (1957, pp. 8–9). On Origen's exegetical methods, see Daniélou (1973, pp. 273–281). Aristotle influenced biblical criticism and oriented it toward a rationalist approach. See Smalley (1983, pp. 292–295). Ambrose, who read Origen, showed Augustine the way of allegoric interpretation of scriptures as a way to conceal its hidden meanings.

300 Isidore, *Allegoriae quaedam sanctae Scripturae*, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 98, cols. 97–130.

lap: “The Throne of the true Solomon is the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in which sits Jesus, the True Wisdom”.

Though the canonization of the three books attributed to Solomon once attracted a fair amount of controversy, Christian tradition did not, for the most part, doubt the idea of his authorship or of Solomon's divine inspiration in composing them. Tertullian, for example, stated that their “supreme antiquity endows these books with the highest authority”.³⁰¹ As to whether it was fitting to grant authority (*auctoritas*) to Ecclesiastes—its author being given to wickedness and sin—the consensus was positive, as Solomon also exemplified the penitent sinner.³⁰²

Solomon's Temple³⁰³

Rabbinic Judaism regarded the construction of the Temple as Solomon's greatest deed—an eternal and even cosmic act. Some sources describe the building and inauguration of the Temple as second in importance only to the theophany at Mount Sinai. The Sages even viewed the construction of the Temple as an act that ensured Solomon a place in the next world. The *Midrash Song of Songs Rabbah* says: “all assist the king; all the more then do all assist for the glory of the king of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, even spirits, even ministering angels”.³⁰⁴ According to R. Berekiah, during its construction, stones carried themselves to the Temple and arranged themselves row by row. The Sages were not, however, universally complimentary about Solomon's great creation: though he spent seven years building the Temple, he devoted thirteen to the construction of his extravagant palace. Not only that, but upon completion of the Temple, he married the Pharaoh's daughter, celebrating their marriage with an elaborate feast.³⁰⁵ Several rabbinic *midrashim*, in fact, even hold Solomon responsible for the Temple's destruction.³⁰⁶ Jewish (and Muslim) legends refer frequently to the Temple, its construction, and the role of demons therein.³⁰⁷

³⁰¹ “Auctoritatem litteris praestat antiquitas summa”. *Apologeticum*, XIX. F1.

³⁰² Minnis (2009, pp. 109–111).

³⁰³ Georg Salzberger (1912). On the Temple in the New Testament, see Hogeterp (2012).

³⁰⁴ I.1.5. The *Midrash* was compiled in the seventh or eighth century CE.

³⁰⁵ *Leviticus Rabbah* 12:5, where the feast and its aftermath relates to the destruction of the Temple.

³⁰⁶ Gilad Sasson, *King and Layman* (Hebrew).

³⁰⁷ Masonic fantasy had it that the building plan on which Solomon based the Temple had been given to Moses at Sinai. The Temple has, since the seventeenth century, symbolized the

In medieval Jewish thought, the Temple was described as the ‘image of the world’, as (in conjunction with its vessels) a symbol of the heavens, and even as a means of influencing earthly events, foreseeing the future, and more.³⁰⁸ Christian tradition, in contrast, assigned less importance to Solomon’s Temple than to the Second Temple built by Herod, where Jesus preached. The Gospels depict the Temple’s destruction in the revolt against the Romans as the result of the Jews’ stubborn refusal to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah: “Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder”.³⁰⁹ The rejection of Jesus’ teachings led to the Temple’s ruin; when his disciples showed him its buildings, Jesus said to them: “You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down”.³¹⁰ According to the Gospel of John, the temple of Jesus’ body was the true Temple,³¹¹ and the Christian church the true realization of Haggai’s prophecy.³¹² Similarly, in Corinthians, the Church is the Temple in spirit, and Christians are the temple of the living God: “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’”.³¹³ In Acts, we find that “the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human

perfect building, which embodies cosmic and supernatural forces. On the idea that at Mount Sinai God showed Moses the design for the building, which had been kept in Paradise, see *Lost Vision of Baruch* 1:4, pp. 6–7, ed. Stephen Pidgeon (2015). On the Masonic order, see Stevenson (1988). As an example of bizarre literature on the Temple, see Christopher Knight and Alan Butler (2007). According to Masonic tradition, Solomon possessed Moses’ secret plans for the Temple. There exists a pseudo-tradition that the Templars discovered the Holy Ark in the ruins of the Temple and found therein ancient secrets from the time of Moses, including information that helped Columbus find his way to America. See Pellech (1997). Medieval legend had it that the Temple was built of cedars taken from the Garden of Eden and carried into this world by flood waters that deposited them on Mount Lebanon, from whence they were brought to Jerusalem.

308 Schwartz (2005), *Studies on Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*, 2nd ed.

309 Matthew 21:44–46 and similar verses.

310 Matthew 24:2.

311 John 2:21.

312 Haggai 2:9: “The glory of this temple shall be greater than the former”.

313 2 Corinthians 6:16, and see 2 Corinthians 5:1. “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house with hands, eternal in heavens”.

hands”³¹⁴; in the Book of Revelation, that the new Jerusalem will descend from the heavens “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”.³¹⁵ The *Epistle of Barnabas*, written between 70–200 C.E., quotes Isaiah—“The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest?”—as evidence that there can be a Temple to God only where he himself tells us that He is building it and perfecting it. Such a Temple will be erected only when we were made new men, created all over again from the beginning; and as a consequence of that, God is at this moment actually dwelling in us”.³¹⁶ In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr taunts his Jewish interlocutor, claiming that there are no grounds for the Jewish contention that Solomon is the subject of Psalm 24 (“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place? [...] Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle”) and that the “King of glory” is, in fact, Jesus.³¹⁷

In the Byzantine era, the hymns of the Jerusalem Christian liturgy for the eve of Palm Sunday included the words: “Corrupt and adulterous *synagoga*, you who have not kept faith with your husband, why have you held on to an inheritance to which you do not merit?”³¹⁸ The fourth-century poet Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, a native of Spain, wrote in his *Tituli Historiarum* (Scenes from History) that “Wisdom built a Temple by Solomon’s obedient hands, and the Queen from the South [i.e., the Queen of Sheba] piles up a great weight of gold. The time is at hand when Christ shall build his Temple in the hearts of man”.³¹⁹

In *Capistrum Iudaeorum*, his polemic against the Jews, the 13th century Dominican friar Raymond (Raimundus) Martini addressed a verse in Haggai according to which “The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former”³²⁰; according to Martini, the prophecy would be fulfilled by the Messiah himself—“the treasure of all nations”.³²¹ For this argument Martini cited putative evidence from the Bible and the Talmud.³²²

314 Acts 7:48.

315 Revelation 21:2.

316 *The Epistle of Barnabas*, in (Staniforth 1968, pp. 178–179).

317 Justin Martyr (2003, p. 212).

318 Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus (1963, pp. 28–29).

319 “*Aedificat templum Sapientia per Solomonis\Obsequium; regina austri graue congerit aurum.\ Tempus adest quo templum hominis sub pectore Christus\ Aedificet, quod Graia colant, quod barbara ditent*” (Dittochaeon XXX). Prudentius (1979, Vol. 2, pp. 356–357).

320 Haggai 2:9.

321 Haggai 2:7.

322 J. Cohen (1999, p. 347).

Eusebius's view was that while Solomon constructed a material Temple, Jesus created a Temple of believers—the body of Christ.³²³ Augustine expressed a similar sentiment: “Jesus built a Temple, not with wood and stone, but with human beings”³²⁴; “Now we build this house by living good lives, and God also builds it by helping us to live”.³²⁵ Hence Psalm 127—“A Song of Ascents, of Solomon: Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it”—refers not to Solomon, who presaged Jesus, but to Jesus himself, who from the hearts of his faithful built a Temple destined to become eternal.³²⁶ The poem “*Das Lob Salomons*” (In Praise of Solomon), written in 1150, is a paean to the greatness of Solomon, the *Rex pacificus* (peace-loving king). Its anonymous author attributes the tale related to a man by the name of Heronimus who discovered it in a book called *Archely*, perhaps a reference to the *Ancient History* of Pseudo-Eusebius. The poem depicts Solomon as a great king, the predecessor of Jesus, and the bridegroom of the Song of Songs; verses 23–24 allegorically describe Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, and the Church and bishops as the teachers of Christianity, concluding with a prayer that Solomon's court be received in the Kingdom of Heaven. The poem tells of how Solomon caught a terrifying dragon who threatened the supply of water to Jerusalem; the dragon having fallen asleep, Solomon fettered it, and the captured serpent then revealed to the king how he might build the Temple in a single year by trapping a great beast that inhabited Lebanon and fashioning from the beast's veins a cord that would cut marble in two as cleanly as a razor. “Thus,” the story concludes, “was the house at Jerusalem built without the use of iron [*ani alliz isin*]”.³²⁷

Thus, the earthly Temple symbolized *Synagoga* and the heavenly Temple, *Eccllesia*.³²⁸ Yet Christianity found a symbol for its victory over Judaism in the earthly Temples as well. “We have triumphed over you, Solomon [*nenikeka se Solomon*]”, the Byzantine Emperor Justin I boasted (according to the historian Procopius of Caesarea) upon the final construction of the Hagia Sophia in Con-

323 *Quaestiones Evangelicae, Supplementa ad Stephanum*, 9–10.

324 xvii:8 in Augustine (1984).

325 xvii:12, p. 734 in Augustine (1984).

326 Possibly this attitude may be the reason why in the iconography of the Orthodox Church there are no depictions of the construction of the Temple. It does appear in Muslim iconography, although the Quran does not mention its existence. See Eva Şarлак and Ruhiye Onurel (2014, p. 323).

327 Brunner (2003, p. 92); Gevnenits (1982, pp. 167–83). See further in Chapters Five and Six.

328 Schlauch (1939, pp. 448–464).

stantinople, a basilica larger and more elaborate than Solomon's Temple.³²⁹ Ahimaaz ben Paltiel (1017–1069?), a Jewish chronicler and poet from Capua, would certainly have been familiar with that claim when he related the story of R. Shefatia, who was ordered to travel to Constantinople and meet with the Emperor in order to debate with him about which edifice was more glorious. R. Shefatia requested that a Bible be brought to him, and therein located proof that Solomon's Temple far surpassed the new church. The Emperor was convinced and admitted: "R. Shefatia has triumphed over me in his wisdom"; to which Shefatia modestly replied: "My Lord, the Scripture prevailed against thee, not I".³³⁰ Perhaps Judaism's "triumph" here related less to the relative magnificence of the Temple than to the fact that the Church, unsatisfied with its own spiritual offerings, resorted to emulating Solomon's "earthly" Temple in constructing elaborate edifices of stone—churches, cathedrals, and basilicas.

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In *Nahar me-Eden*—a short history of the Jewish people for young readers adapted and translated from a Lutheran Christian collection of 52 tales from each of the Old and New Testaments³³¹—the writer David Samostz (1789–1864) adapted the original's moral regarding the Temple: "For the Lord of Hosts Solomon built our Temple / Such a magnificent edifice had never been built by a king; but I am a poor man, a simple weaver / I cannot build you a house for your eternal praise / Take instead my heart, where I will sacrifice my gratitude and offerings of peace".³³² Like Christian tradition (and Isaiah), Samostz wished for the reconstruction of the earthly Temple; nor was he alone in that desire.

329 *De aedificiis*, 1, 1. This story is also related by the fifth-century Syrian monk and theologian Evagrius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, 4, 31. See Paulus Silentarius, *Ekphrasis of Sophia Church*; Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1, 4, 13; Procopius, *De aedificiis*, book 1, 1.

330 *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz*, 17–18 (Salzmann 1966, pp. 70–71). See Bonfil (2009).

331 Hübner (1986 [1714], p. 150).

332 Samostz (1837, p. 154). Regarding the book, its author, and its aims, see the M.A. thesis by Ran HaCohen (1994, pp. 47–63). The book was based on Hübner. Samostz did not translate the fifty-two New Testament tales.

The Queen of Sheba's Visit as a Typological Event

The event in Solomon's biography perhaps most popular in the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions, as well as in Ethiopian tradition³³³ and in folktales and *belles lettres*, is the story of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem, as described in 1 Kings 10:1–13 and 2 Chronicles 9:1–12.³³⁴ According to commentators, the story was mentioned in both the prophecies of Isaiah—"all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord"—and in Psalms—"May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts".³³⁵ In Christian literature, the visit serves to foretell Jesus' universal mission; it is mentioned in Mark 10:1–11, Luke 11:29–32, and Matthew 12:42. In the latter verse, Jesus tells the Pharisees: "The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here!"³³⁶

Christian tradition holds that the Queen's visit presaged the coming of the Magi³³⁷ to the manger in Bethlehem, where they brought to the infant Jesus "gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh"³³⁸—clearly a parallel to Psalms 72:10 and to the prophecy in Isaiah. Her visit furthermore foretold the future acknowledgement of Jesus and his teachings by other nations,³³⁹ and her pronouncement that God had appointed Solomon "to execute justice and righteousness"³⁴⁰ was read as intended for Jesus. Bede the Venerable described the visit in his *Quaestiones super Regum Libros* (Questions on the Books of Kings), as did Isidore of Seville, who wrote: "The queen from the south who came to hear the wisdom

333 See Silberman (1974); Schechter (1890); Stein (1993).

334 Lassner (1993); Milstein (1995, pp. 115–117).

335 Isaiah 60:6 and Psalms 72:10.

336 Matthew 12:42.

337 According to later tradition, these were three (because of the three gifts) "wise men" or "kings" (a trio appears in a mosaic in the sixth-century Basilica Di St. Apollinare Nuovo, in Ravenna); the traditions around them noted the various countries from which they came and their race or the color of their skin in order to underscore the universality of Jesus' teachings. Legendary biographies for the three were also composed, such as that by the Carmelite friar Johannes von Hildesheim (1315/20–1375), *Historia de gestis et translatione trium regum* (Die Legende von den Heiligen Drei Königen [The Legend of the Three Holy Kings]). See M. B. Freeman (1979).

338 Matthew 2:11.

339 Eusebius, *Commentary* on Isaiah 11.

340 1 Kings 10:9.

of Solomon is to be understood as the Church, which assembles from the utmost limits of the world to hear the voice of God”.

The Theological and Allegorical Interpretations of Solomon's Books

The three books of *Sapientia Salomonis*—biblical books ascribed to Solomon—are the Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. All three have served, in every historical period, as a bottomless source for myriad commentaries, adaptations, and other uses. They have been employed by diverse authors to express diverse worldviews in numerous and varied contexts, including the conflict between Judaism and Christianity. The three books were furthermore believed to complement Solomon's biography and reflect the process of his spiritual development. I shall cite only a handful of the countless interpretations and commentaries on the subject, while noting that these commentaries were often forced to grapple with several internal contradictions, such as the different connotations of the Hebrew word “*chokhmah*” (wisdom) in the Song of Songs versus Ecclesiastes.

The Sages, characteristically, were divided in their opinions about the three books, supplying diverse arguments for—and against—their canonization in the Holy Scriptures. Some Sages drew distinctions between the books, divided on the question of which of the three should be considered holy or profane. The accepted view, however, was that all three were written in the divine spirit.

Rabbi Benjamin ben Levi stated that “the Sages wished to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes, for they found in it ideas that leaned toward heresy. They argued, was it right that Solomon should have said the following: ‘Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth’.³⁴¹ Moses said, ‘and not follow the lust of your own heart and your own eyes (Num 15:39) but Solomon said, ‘Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes’.³⁴² What then? Are there neither judges nor justice? Is all restraint to be removed? When, however, he said, ‘But know then that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment,’ they admitted that Solomon had spoken well”.³⁴³ R. Yudan said [...] that all who teach the Torah to the public.... the holy spirit rests upon him”. *Song of Songs Rabbah* continues: “Said the Holy

³⁴¹ Ecclesiastes 11:9.

³⁴² Ecclesiastes 11:9.

³⁴³ *Leviticus Rabbah* 28:1.

One, blessed be He, to [Solomon]: ‘Thou dost seek out words of Torah; I swear that I will not withhold thy reward. Because I cause the holy spirit to rest on thee’. Forthwith the Holy Spirit rested on him and he composed these three books”.³⁴⁴ And: “So the heart of Solomon was full of wisdom but no one knew what was in it but when the holy spirit rested on him he composed three books”.³⁴⁵ *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* provides a brief description of the controversy: “it is said, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes were suppressed; for since they were held to be mere parables and not part of the Holy Writings, [the religious authorities] arose and suppressed them; [and so they remained] until the men of Hezekiah [the Men of the Great Assembly³⁴⁶] came and interpreted them”.³⁴⁷

Early Christianity accepted the attribution of all three books to Solomon with scarce reservations³⁴⁸; they proved a wellspring of references to Jesus, his teachings, and the Church, and a fount of prophecies, moral teachings, and cosmology. According to Origen, each of the books dealt with a different area of knowledge: Proverbs taught moral science, or ethics; Ecclesiastes examined the natural sciences; and, in the Song of Songs, Solomon “instills into the soul the love of things divine and heavenly using for his purpose the figure of the Bride and Bridegroom”.³⁴⁹ Solomon-Ecclesiastes presaged Jesus, the “true Ecclesiastes”, who would gather the Church into a unified flock. The Cappadocian Church Father and mystic Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-c.394) believed he had deciphered the philosophy hidden in Solomon’s books, which conveyed a “philosophical way of life”.³⁵⁰ Thomas Aquinas relied on Plotinus when he wrote that the three books might be classified according to the three grades of virtue. The first was the political virtues, expressed in Proverbs; the second was the purgative virtues, described in Ecclesiastes; and the third was the purged soul, whereby a man, wholly cleansed of worldly cares, delights in the contemplations of wisdom

344 *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1,4–5. (According Neusner’s numbering. In the Wilna edition, it would be 1.1.8–9.)

345 *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1,7.

346 The legendary Jewish legislative and administrative council during the early Second Temple period.

347 *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* A 1.1 p. 2, trans. Judah Goldin, Yale University Press, 1955.

348 Augustine writes that “weightier authorities have no hesitation in rejecting the attribution. Nevertheless, the Church, and the Western Church in particular, has from early times accepted them [the three books] as canonical” (CD XVII:20), 354. The Catholic canon included *The Wisdom of Solomon* from the third to first centuries B.C.E.

349 Origen (1957, p. 41).

350 Pelikan (1993, pp. 180–181). For further discussion see Chapter Seven.

alone; that virtue Aquinas identified in the Song of Songs.³⁵¹ Isidore of Seville believed that Ecclesiastes taught natural philosophy (that is, physics) while the Song of Songs dealt with rational philosophy, or logic.³⁵²

The Song of Songs

Of the three books attributed to Solomon, the Song of Songs seems to have been the subject of the largest number of commentaries.³⁵³ It would be no exaggeration to speak of a sea of commentaries, divided on the issue of whether the text should be considered “literally”, as a mere love song, or allegorically; and if the latter, as an allegory of what? In any event, both Jewish and Christian commentaries employed similar hermeneutical principles and exegetical methods, and both consider the book as a theological and mystical allegory.³⁵⁴

It was R. Akiva, in the second century, who decreed that the book should not be read literally.³⁵⁵ In the Mishnah, we find that “R. Akiva said: Heaven forbid, no man of Israel has ever disputed about the Song of Songs, claiming that it did not defile the hands. The whole world is not worthy of the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel, for all the Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Song is Holy of Holies”.³⁵⁶ The saying: “Had the Torah not been granted us, the Song of Songs would have sufficed to manage the world” was furthermore attributed to him. *Sanhedrin 101a* also expresses a view of the text as possessing religious significance: “He who recites a verse of the Song of Songs and treats it as a secular air, and one who recites a verse at the banqueting table unseasonably, brings evil upon the world. Because the Torah girds itself in sackcloth, and stands before the Holy One, blessed be He, and laments before Him, ‘Sovereign of the Universe! Thy children have made me as a harp upon which they frivolously play’”.³⁵⁷

³⁵¹ “Inaugural Sermons of 1256”, in Aquinas (1998, p. 11).

³⁵² Minnis (2009, p. 26). See also Smalley (1983).

³⁵³ See Bartal (2009, pp. 113–154).

³⁵⁴ In Ashkenazi synagogues, the Song of Songs is read on the Sabbath of the intermediate days of Passover, and in Sephardic synagogues on every Sabbath eve.

³⁵⁵ On the hypothesis that the Song of Songs is based on earlier writings, which also preceded Kings, see Zakovitch (2015).

³⁵⁶ *Mishna Yadayim* 3,5.

³⁵⁷ Modern Hebrew literature has violated this rule, having “secularized” Song of Songs and used its words as lyrics for popular songs.

The rule established by R. Akiva opened the gates to a plethora of allegorical, historical, and mystical interpretations of the book that created common ground with Christian³⁵⁸ allegoristic and mystical commentaries. However, that is not the main point in the Midrash, according to which the legitimacy and authority of the Song of Songs derived from its utility as a gateway to understanding the Bible.

The Jewish allegorical reading of the Song of Songs describes the eternal covenant between God and the People of Israel and conveys a message about the redemption of the Jewish people and the construction of the Temple. *Mishnah Ta'anit*³⁵⁹ interprets the verse “come out. Look, O daughters of Zion, at King Solomon”³⁶⁰ thus: “Go out, maidens of Jerusalem and look on King Solomon and on the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, and on the day of the gladness of his heart”—“‘the day of his wedding’ that is ‘the giving of the Torah’”. According to Maimonides, “Solomon, of blessed memory, inspired by the Holy Spirit, foresaw that the prolonged duration of exile would incite some of our people to seek to terminate it before the appointed time, and consequently they would perish or meet with disaster. Therefore he admonished them in metaphorical language to desist, as we read: I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the wild does: do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready!”³⁶¹ The *Epistle to Yemen* (1172) aimed to hearten the Jews that they might avoid succumbing to either their oppressors or to messianic delusion. He further added that in the Song of Songs, Solomon metaphorically described the people of Israel as Shulamit, a woman of perfect beauty, marred by no defect.³⁶² In his own commentary on the Song of Songs, Rashi (R. Shlomo Yitzhaki, 1040–1105) regarded the book as an allegory of God’s love for the Jewish people, where the latter is likened to a widow yearning for the love of her youth; Solomon, made prophetic through the divine spirit, foresees a harsh future before her, until her redemption at the End of Days. Thus, for example, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth” expresses the bride’s longing for the bridegroom, in contrast to Origen’s interpretation in which the Church yearns for union with Jesus. (Origen also interpreted “for thy love is better than wine” as referring to the love (*ubera*) of the groom [Jesus]; replete in wis-

358 Yonah Frankel (1994); Urbach (1961).

359 Chapter Four, *Mishnah* 8.

360 Song of Solomon 3:11.

361 Song of Solomon 3:5; Maimonides bases himself on *b.Ketubbot* 111a where the verse is quoted, but without naming Solomon.

362 Maimonides’ “The Epistle to Yemen”, in Halkin and Hartman (1985; pp. 104–105, 130), Kellner (1991).

dom and knowledge, it is superior to the earlier wine of the Torah and the prophets.³⁶³

The Middle Ages saw the development of a Jewish rationalist and allegorical exegesis, universal in nature. That exegesis read the Song of Songs in light of the “doctrine of intelligence; the “bride”, for example, was understood as representing the soul, housed within a material form.³⁶⁴ In “*Sefer Sha’ar ha-Ceshek*”, the introduction to his book *Ceshek Shlomo* (The Delight of Solomon), the Jewish-Italian neo-Platonic scholar and biblical exegete Johanan ben Isaac Alemanno (c. 1434–1503)³⁶⁵—to whom I will return in forthcoming chapters—depicted the Song of Songs as a spiritual biography of Solomon and a parallel to his intellectual biography as a *homo universalis*: a scholar of wide-ranging pursuits, well-versed in many of the “natural sciences” and in religious law, magic, alchemy, and astrology.

Christian interpretations³⁶⁶ held that if, in fact, King Solomon was the author of the Song of Songs, then he foretold the covenant between the Christian faithful (the *Ecclesia*) and Jesus. Origen wrote: “In this [book] he [Solomon] instills into the soul the love of things divine and heavenly, using for his purpose the figure of the Bride and Bridegroom, and teaches us that communion with God must be attained by the path of charity and love”.³⁶⁷ Solomon’s bride in Song of Songs³⁶⁸ is the *Ecclesia*, gathered from among the nations (*Haec sponsa, quae loquitur ecclesiae personam tenet ex gentibus congregatae*); and the “lily of the valleys”³⁶⁹ represents the Church of the gentiles. The Torah brought no man to a state of perfection, and hence the word of God could not advance beyond the flower and achieve the perfection of the fruit; only in the valley of the gentiles did it become a lily. “But what sort of lily? Surely just such a one as that of which He Himself says in the Gospels that the heavenly Father clothes it, and that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these”.³⁷⁰ The Song

363 I base this on an article by Sarah Kamin, “Rashi’s Commentary on the Song of Songs and Jewish-Christian Polemics” (Kamin 2008a). See also Kamin (2008b).

364 Schwartz (1993; 2016). However, as we shall see further on, no description was given of the content of Solomon’s “wise soul” or of the nature of the “wisdom” that he meant to disseminate to humanity.

365 See Chapter Seven.

366 See Astell (1990).

367 *Commentary*, Prologue. See Origen (1957, pp. 31–41).

368 Song of Solomon 3:11: “[...] come out. Look, O daughters of Zion, at King Solomon, at the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart”.

369 Song of Solomon 2:1.

370 *Commentary in Canticum (Commentary of Song of Songs)*, 177.

of Songs, according to Origen, depicts the mystical ascension of the soul and the soul's relationship to Jesus: "[It] sings by the spirit the song of the marriage whereby the Church is joined and allied to Christ the heavenly bridegroom, desiring to unite with him through speech". It describes the union with perfection that occurs after everything is subjugated to God, who will then be called Solomon—He in whom lies Peace. According to Ambrose,³⁷¹ the words "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem" symbolized the *Synagoga* as black because it lived in error and disbelief; yet it was still comely since, in the end, it would find faith. Augustine too considered the Song of Songs a representation of the marriage of Jesus and the Church; it expressed, he felt, "a kind of spiritual delight felt by holy minds in the marriage of the king and queen of the city, namely Christ and his Church".³⁷² Gregory of Nyssa maintained that the book expressed a sublime philosophy—the unification of all mankind, joined in yearning for a common goal. In the Song, Solomon appears "in the persona of the Bridegroom, the Word of God who, as Gregory saw the matter, brings the Bride step by step to ever greater and higher attainment. Indeed, Gregory saw the Song's successive praises and characterization of the believing soul (i.e., the Bride) as marking a series of steps or "ascents"". ³⁷³ And the Carolingian exegete Haimo of Auxerre (d. 875) wrote in his popular commentary *Commentarium in Cantica Canticorum* that the words "Return, return Shulamite, that we may behold you" are the words of *Ecclesia* to *Synagoga*, bidding her to accept the true doctrine.³⁷⁴

Scholastic and monastic commentaries differed only on the question of whether the connection in question existed between Jesus and the entire Church, or on a more personal level between Jesus and each believing soul. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), who wrote eighty-six sermons on two chapters of the Song of Songs, stressed its moral-tropological nature. The book, in his view, was an account of Jesus as the bridegroom of the soul by inspiration from heaven. In it, Solomon sang the praises of Christ and his Church, the grace of holy love, and the sacraments of eternal marriage, at the same time giving voice to the deepest desire of the holy soul.³⁷⁵ For Bernard, the Song of Songs served as evidence that the truth lay in the allegorical, tropological, and anagogical reading, while the Jewish "literal" reading wrongly interpreted it as dealing

³⁷¹ *Commentarium*, 1:4–5.

³⁷² *City of God*, XVIII:20 (Augustine 1984). According to Augustine, this was a mystical epithalamium; see *City of God*, p. 757. Also see Minnis (2009, p. 43 and note 22, p. 236).

³⁷³ Gregory of Nyssa (1994, p. xxxvi).

³⁷⁴ According to Monroe (2007, pp. 33–61).

³⁷⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux (1981) 1.4.8.

with ‘worldly matters’ on the level of unripe figs (a reference to Song of Songs 2:13: “The fig tree puts forth its figs”).

One exception to such commentary is Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428), who belonged to the school of Antioch, active between the third and fifth centuries. Theodore rejected the allegorical interpretation; Lawson called him a jejune rationalist since he believed that Solomon had composed the book as a response to criticism of his marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter. Theodore was condemned by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 and was regarded as the father of Nestorianism.³⁷⁶ His work was echoed a millennium later when William (Guillaume) of St. Thierry (c. 1330) also wrote that the Song of Songs was Solomon’s celebration of the marriage in question.

Proverbs

Jesus’ proverbs differ from Solomon’s; the latter are aphorism wrapped in metaphor, and more greatly resemble the Sages’ *midrashim* (homiletic interpretations), which are studded with proverbs themselves.³⁷⁷ The *Midrash Song of Songs Rabbah* interprets Ecclesiastes 12:9 as follows: “And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. And made ears [handles] for the Torah”.³⁷⁸ In other words, the proverbs are akin to handles on a pot or jug, that one may grasp in order to examine the contents.³⁷⁹ Other Sages compared Solomon to one who has discovered the entrance to a vast palace: “Until Solomon arose there was no one who was able to comprehend the words of the Torah, but as soon as he arose, all began to comprehend the Torah”. He is similarly likened to a man making his way through a grove of cane stalks or lowering a bucket into a pool of deep water; thus “from proverb to proverb, Solomon uncovered the secrets of the Torah”. R. Yudan attributed a different order to the process: “Anyone who speaks Torah [to others], receives the blessing of being imbued by the holy spirit. And from whom do we learn this? From Solomon, who, having spoken Torah, was imbued by the holy spirit and was moved to speak his books”.³⁸⁰ Thus, Solomon’s proverbs open the

³⁷⁶ On Theodore see McLeod (2009).

³⁷⁷ Flusser (1979, pp. 150–209). However, Jesus’ parables were recited orally before an audience.

³⁷⁸ *Midrash Song of Songs Rabbah* 1, 8.

³⁷⁹ Meir (2014); Boyarin (1990, pp. 105–116).

³⁸⁰ *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1, 8.

way to an understanding of the Torah; at the same time, it is through the communal study of the Torah that the spirit of God rests upon the learner.

In Augustine's view, the Book of Proverbs demonstrated that all men "have come to know that Christ is the wisdom of God" (Proverbs 9:1–5); 'Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars, slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine, she has also set her table. She has sent out her servant-girls' [...]'". Here we recognize with certainty the Wisdom of God, that is, the Word, co-eternal with the Father who built, as a house for himself, a human body, in the virgin's womb, and united the Church to it, as limbs are united to the head".³⁸¹ Clement of Alexandria quoted Proverbs 2:1–2: "For the soul, methinks, joined with soul, and spirit with spirit, in the sowing of the word, will make that which is sown grow and germinate. And every one who is instructed is in respect of subjection the son of the instructor".³⁸²

Medieval Christian culture in Europe was "thick weaves of proverbs"³⁸³; Michael Hattaway writes that "it is obvious that Solomon's moral philosophy was disseminated in countless collections of proverbs and adages",³⁸⁴ which served as a form of speech in both high and popular literature,³⁸⁵ as in the dialogue between Solomon and Saturnus.³⁸⁶ At times, proverbs were attributed to Solomon—the "son of Sapience"—of which he was not the author.³⁸⁷ These were quoted most often—but not exclusively—in the context of reflections on the correct conduct of rulers and others. In the dispute about the doctrine of two swords, Pope Boniface VIII quoted Proverbs 8:15 in declaring that "through Him the apostolic princes govern and kings rule".³⁸⁸ Prudence, Melibeus's wife in the *Canterbury Tales* "Tale of Melibeus", is another invoker of Solomon's aphorisms: "Solomon saith 'that right as moths in the sheep's fleece annoy [do injury] to the cloth, and

381 *City of God* XVII: 20, (Augustine 1984, p. 755).

382 Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata* (1955, 2nd ed., p. 299).

383 Ziolkowski (2008, p. 29); for further discussion see Chapter Seven. Proverbs was frequently quoted, particularly for pedagogical purposes. One example is "Garden of Delights" (*Hortus deliciarum*), a pedagogical tool for young novices in 336 illustrations by Herrad of Landsberg, the Abbey of present-day Mont Saint-Odile, Alsace in 1167–1185. See also Minnis (2009).

384 Hattaway (1968, p. 503); West (1954).

385 Zemon Davis (1975). Adelaid de Condet, the lady of Thorngate Castel (England), commissioned, in c.1150, a translation of *Proverbs* into Anglo-Saxon by Sanson de Nanteuil that was used in the education of her son.

386 See the introduction by John Kemble to *The Dialogue of Solomon and Saturnus* (Kemble 1848, pp. 104–113). Regarding that book, see Chapter Seven.

387 These proverbs were enormously popular. See, for example, *Proverbia Salomonis, quae sunt historiae tabellae*, 1517; *Proverbia Salomonis*, 1557.

388 Ullman (1965, p. 128).

the small worms to the tree, right so annoyeth sorrow to the heart of man'; When the condition of man is pleasant and liking to God, he changeth the heart of the man's adversaries, and constrains them to beseech him of peace of grace".³⁸⁹

The saying in Proverbs 22:6: "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray" was widely accepted as a pedagogical principle and given various interpretations in Jewish and Christian societies. One example is the sermon by the humanist Thomas Horn of Kings College-Cambridge, given in 1679 before the graduates of Eton: "When Solomon says, train up a child in the way he should go, we understand that as catechizing and informing him in the way of Religion in which everyone should go...".³⁹⁰

Ecclesiastes³⁹¹

Ecclesiastes has always been an exegetical challenge,³⁹² interweaving as it does words of heresy, words of piety, and practical wisdom. According to Jewish and Christian traditions, the book—the last ascribed to Solomon—was composed in the king's old age and reflects his life experience: "But in his old age, king Solomon was near to his death. Then the holy spirit rested upon him and spoke three books—Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes",³⁹³ though "[as] he aged he babbled foolishly".³⁹⁴ Several verses were thus interpreted as supplementing what was known of his biography and explicating the lessons he derived from his life.

The question of whether the book merited canonization was controversial because it contained "matters that lead toward heresy" and "words that contradict each other". According to Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman, the Sages intended to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes because they found ideas in it that leaned to-

389 Chaucer's tale is an adaptation of a French "treatise" in prose: "Le Livre de Me'libe'e et de Dame Prudence". Also see "The Merchant": "It was only that you are so full of wisdom \ that in your exalted prudence it does not please you \ to depart from the proverb of Solomon". Chaucer (1971, p. 253).

390 See in Heyd (2011). According to Hattaway, Erasmus uses ammunition texts from Ecclesiastes and Proverbs for his virtuoso paradoxes that opposed the childlike simplicity of Christ to the sophisticated wisdom of the schoolmen. Hattaway (1968, p. 508).

391 The Hebrew appellation "Kohélet" [Ecclesiastes] derives, according to *Kohélet Rabbah*, from the fact that "[Solomon] spoke in the *kahal* [assembly]".

392 Bolin (2017).

393 *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:1.10 (Neusner's translation counts it as 1:1. 6.17), and *Yalkut Shimoni Kohélet*, § 965.

394 *Yalkut Kohélet* § 965.

ward heresy. They said “Should Solomon have uttered the following: What profit hath man of all his labor? This might imply, might it not, that labor in the study of the Torah was also included? On the other hand, they argued, if he had said ‘of all labor’ and left it at that, we might have thought that he meant to include labor as well as the study of Torah, however, he does not say this but ‘of all his labor’ implying that in his own labor man finds no profit, but that he does find profit in his labor studying Torah”.³⁹⁵ *Kohelet Rabbah* makes an even greater effort to find Ecclesiastes “worthy”: “I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to get pleasure so long as they live. But also that every man should eat and drink”. R. Tanhuma in the name of R. Nahman, the son of R. Samuel b. Nahman, and R. Menahem said; ‘All the eating and drinking mentioned in this book refer to Torah and good deeds’”.³⁹⁶

In Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus’ (342\7–420) view, Ecclesiastes taught of “the vanity in everything that touches upon our senses in the world”. He interpreted the verse “one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh” (1:4) as meaning that “the first generation of Jews passed, and the later generation of Christians came; now that that the synagogue has disappeared, the land will survive as long until the Church has fully entered (*terra autem tamdiu stat, quamdiu synagoga recedente ecclesia omnis introeat*). In reply to which the Midrash reads: “R Isaak said: ‘A kingdom comes and a kingdom goes but Israel abides forever’”.³⁹⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus (329–390) found in Ecclesiastes overwhelming proof that at the end of his life Solomon realized that philosophy was “futility, utter futility” (*mataiotes mataioteton*).³⁹⁸ According to Augustine, Ecclesiastes was “concerned with the two cities, that of the Devil, and that of Christ, and with their kings, the Devil and Christ”.³⁹⁹ If, according to Bonaventure’s commentary on Ecclesiastes (written in 1254–1257), its author was a wicked man, could it nonetheless possess authority, or was it rather written by a penitent man, and hence worthy? Like Hieronymus before him, the Franciscan theologian Bonaventure (1221–1274) replied that the epilogue, in which worldly vanity is renounced, was ultimately a declaration of faith.⁴⁰⁰

Is Ecclesiastes a book of wisdom? During the Renaissance, Hattaway writes, it “became a polemical instrument used by humanists who preached humility

³⁹⁵ *Midrash Rabbah Leviticus* 28.1.

³⁹⁶ *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 3:12.

³⁹⁷ *Kohelet Rabbah* 1:4 (Hirshman 2016, p. 42).

³⁹⁸ Pelikan (1993, p. 178).

³⁹⁹ Augustine, xvii, 21, p. 756.

⁴⁰⁰ See Minnis (2009, pp. 110–111).

and skepticism in their attacks on the schools (scholasticism)".⁴⁰¹ One could argue that the words "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone"⁴⁰² demonstrate that faith is superior to wisdom and that there is no room for speculation on God's nature and deeds, or that faith and wisdom are intertwined.

Christianity links the prefiguration of Jesus in Solomon only to positive aspects of Solomon's biography, and one might argue that the canonization of the three books attributed to him, which became a fount of allegories, symbols, moral instruction, and world-views, was not necessarily an outcome of this attribution, but that they achieved immortality in their own right. Nonetheless, had the books not been attributed to Solomon they might not have attained such a lofty status. Nor would they have been perceived as guides in three separate spheres: in mysticism and esoterica (the Song of Songs), ethics (Proverbs), and philosophy (Ecclesiastes), which were putatively merged in the work of a single man—who was at once a king, poet, and philosopher. In such a context, the negative aspects of the author's biography were of no importance. Whenever a need existed for the formulation of a complete and unified theological or philosophical doctrine, Solomon's three books were the essential sources.⁴⁰³

This brief overview thus leads us to an ineluctable contradiction: Solomon, a king who sinned, nonetheless was perceived by Christianity as a prefiguration of Jesus, and the three books attributed to him revered as canonical authority and inexhaustible wellspring of wisdom.

401 Minnis (2009, p. 504).

402 Ecclesiastes 12:13.

403 In his *Solomon Among the Postmoderns* Peter J. Leithart (2008) goes so far to argue that the passage "Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity" should be translated "Vapor of Vapors, all is Vapor", and in the entire book of Ecclesiastes indicate that Solomon "resonated with the themes of today's postmodernism".