

Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue: “The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World”, *Religions* 2016

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In “The Wayfinders”, a Special Issue for the journal *Religions*, scholars explore the significance of the biblical wisdom literature for the current day. At the heart of these six articles lies the question: why does ancient wisdom matter in the modern world? The biblical wisdom corpus includes the books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and selected Psalms, each represented in this Issue. Every article also incorporates a context or theme related to the modern world and adopts an approach that suits theologians, scholars of religion or of any of the themes addressed, and even lay readers with an interest in the Bible and its application for today.

Jack Collins [1] looks at Psalms 111 and 112. The first depicts the “big story” of God’s redemptive deeds for his people, and the second stresses the place of “wisdom” in the “little story” of daily life. The juxtaposition of these psalms integrates both narratives. Bálint Zabán [2] considers “Metaphors in the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible and Contemporary Art”. He analyzes the use of biblical concepts, like Proverb’s “tree of life” and Qohelet’s *hebel*, within contemporary fine art and *belles lettres*. This study carries implications for biblical interpretation and literacy.

Katharine Dell [3] expounds “the fool”, primarily within Proverbs, and develops a portrait of this character type in relation to the book’s themes. The fool’s traits serve as a warning for people even today. Arthur Keefer [4] also looks at Proverbs but in this case at its moral paradigm. He compares the modern fixation on rule-based morality with the biblical emphasis on character. In the book of Job, Abigail Pelham [5] discovers the connection between possessions and personal identity. As in the contemporary context, this connection creates problems, but the biblical story and its characters offer alternative struggles and solutions. Jennie Grillo [6] compares Matthew Arnold’s and Charles Taylor’s understandings of modernity with Ecclesiastes in which modern motifs appear within a pre-modern context.

These contributors recognize the vast distance between the ancient and modern worlds. But, with Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Psalms, they traverse this space and show the significance of biblical wisdom for a contemporary context.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

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2. Bálint Károly Zabán. “Metaphors in the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible and Contemporary Art.” *Religions* 7 (2016): article 106.
3. Katharine Dell. “The Laughter of Fools: The Relevance of Wisdom in Today’s World.” *Religions* 7 (2016): article 110. [[CrossRef](#)]

4. Arthur Keefer. "Revising the Modern Moral Paradigm with the Book of Proverbs." *Religions* 7 (2016): article 79. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Abigail Pelham. "Possessions and Identity: Job's Problems and Ours." *Religions* 7 (2016): article 78. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. Jennie Grillo. "Qohelet and the Marks of Modernity: Reading Ecclesiastes with Matthew Arnold and Charles Taylor." *Religions* 7 (2016): article 77. [[CrossRef](#)]



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