

Article

# Psalms 111–112: Big Story, Little Story

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**Abstract:** This study argues that the juxtaposition of Psalms 111–112 offers wisdom for life. Psalm 111, in stressing God’s mighty deeds of redemption for his people, focuses on the “big story” for the whole people; Psalm 112, in stressing “wisdom,” encourages each member of God’s people in a day-to-day walk, a “little story,” that contributes to the big story of the whole people.

**Keywords:** Proverbs; Psalms; Wisdom; story; community

## 1. Introduction

To the larger consideration of how, if at all, Biblical wisdom literature provides resources for living in the contemporary world, I will focus on a small portion of the Psalms, namely Psalms 111–112 [1]. I write as a Christian, with an interest in how careful academic study might inform Christian practice.

These two psalms are of quite different types. Psalm 111 celebrates the great works that the Lord has done: “he sent redemption to his people” (111:9). Psalm 112 celebrates the blessedness of the person “who fears the LORD” (112:1): “it is well with” such a person (112:5). Psalm 111 looks at the “big picture,” the deeds that the Lord has done for his “people,” that is, for the corporate entity. Psalm 112 attends primarily to the “smaller picture,” the conduct and effects of particular persons within the people.

At the same time the two psalms undoubtedly belong together, as many have noticed [2]. Both begin with *Hallelujah*, and both follow the same acrostic pattern, with 22 lines, each beginning with the successive Hebrew letters. The acrostic pattern that Psalms 111–112 have in common separates them from Psalm 113, which likewise opens with *Hallelujah*. And the particular acrostic pattern sets these apart from the other acrostics in the Psalter [3]. Psalm 111 ends by mentioning “the fear of the LORD,” while Psalm 112 begins with “the man who fears the LORD”—a tail-to-head linkage. Further, in Psalm 111 it is the Lord whose “righteousness endures forever” (111:3), who is “gracious and merciful” (111:4, echoing Exod. 34:6), and whose works are “justice” (111:7), while in Psalm 112 it is the godly person whose “righteousness endures forever” (112:3, 9) and who is “gracious and merciful” (112:4), and who conducts his affairs with “justice” (112:5). The implication of this, that the person who fears the Lord and attends to his commandments has the Lord’s own moral traits reflected in his character, will figure in to our perception of how the two psalms work together.

## 2. Preliminary Points

In order to carry out this study in a reasonable space, I will mention a handful of points that I wish to take as given, but which are potentially controversial; I will give references to places that offer adequate argument. To begin with, I take the primary function of the Psalter, at least in its post-exilic form, to be that of a songbook for (regular) corporate worship [4]. That is, I acknowledge that many have pursued special liturgical occasions as the *origins* for some of the Psalms, and that there have always been those who argue that the book is more oriented toward private prayer than public song. More recently, many have come to view the Psalter as a book, with development of themes (“canonical

readings”); here the assumed manner of consumption is reading from cover to cover [5]. Whereas I do not here deny that each of these is worthy of discussion, I nevertheless simply recognize that the evidence, at least in the post-exilic era, is that it functioned as a songbook [6–8].

My second point taken as given is that the wisdom in the book of Proverbs is “covenantal” and “Yahwistic” (again, at least in the final form and in the post-exilic era; this covenantal orientation is unmistakable in the Deuterocanonical books of Wisdom and Ben Sira). Many have taken the origins of “wisdom literature” as indifferent to, or even skeptical toward, “the distinctive elements of Israelite cult, history, and theology” [9,10], although this view is now less prevalent than it once was. A number of features in the canonical form of Proverbs tell against this, as has been argued elsewhere [11–13]; the book is after all, organized around “the fear of YAHWEH” (1:7).

At the same time, the main focus of Proverbs is the everyday. Derek Kidner observed, “the institutions [of the covenant] are assumed, even if they are not stressed”; and then he goes on to insist ([14], pp. 34, 35),

We should do Proverbs a poor service if we contrived to vest it in a priestly ephod or a prophet’s mantle, for it is a book which seldom takes you to church.

Rather, as Kidner also notes ([14], p. 13),

There are details of character small enough to escape the mesh of the law and the broadsides of the prophets, and yet decisive in personal dealings. Proverbs moves in this realm, asking what a person is like to live with, or to employ; how he manages his affairs, his time and himself.

A third point concerns the designations of individual psalms as “wisdom psalms.” It has been common in Psalms studies to refer to the various “forms” we find in the Psalter. It would help if we were to acknowledge that this categorization is extrinsic, and after the fact; nevertheless, the classification, based on our perception of their content and functions, is helpful, so long as we keep it as a heuristic guideline rather than a strict rule [15–17]. By this approach, we can accept a psalm that performs more than one function (e.g., Psalm 56 combines both lament and thanksgiving).

The category of “wisdom psalms” presents a challenge, since there is no agreement on what constitute criteria by which we may call them that [18–20]. But with the heuristic approach I prefer, we can recognize that a number of psalms incorporate subject matter that is common in the wisdom books such as Proverbs (e.g., Ps. 34:11–14); and some psalms are wholly given over to such subject matter (e.g., Psalms 127–128).

The significance of these points lies in the fact that a “wisdom theme,” by appearing in the Psalms, has become part of the liturgical life of Israel, a song sung in public worship [21,22] The rhetorical function of these liturgical songs is to shape what C. S. Lewis famously called the “chest”—that is, “emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments.” [23] Of course, those sentiments may be noble or base, depending on who does the shaping and for what cause; and this is why the “inspiration” of the psalms has mattered so greatly to the people of God. We may call this system of likes and dislikes *the affective side of the worldview* (one’s basic stance toward God, the world and life, held in what the Bible calls the heart); we can further recognize how crucial it is, if the people of God are to exhibit in their lives the beauty of God’s will. As Lewis also noted [24–26]

The proper use [of rhetoric that shapes the emotions] is lawful and necessary because, as Aristotle points out, intellect of itself “moves nothing”: the transition from thinking to doing, in nearly all men at nearly all moments, needs to be assisted by appropriate states of feeling.

Now, Proverbs uses its own rhetorical devices, and the wisdom sections of the Psalms presuppose familiarity with them. For example, as Knut Heim has argued, Proverbs employs co-referentiality for its key terms; that is, such terms as *righteous*, *upright*, *wise* describe the same people, namely

exemplary faithful members of God's people, from different angles; while the same applies to *fool* and *wicked* for noticeably unfaithful members of the people [27,28]. Secondly, the characterizations are highly idealized, or "caricatures"—that is, they are portraits of people with features exaggerated for easy identification. This serves the purpose of inculcating values, again by way of likes and dislikes. The positive figures are attractive, and worthy of emulation; to be a member of their company is appealing. On the other hand, the negative figures are ugly and absurd, and the faithful can recognize any of their negative traits within themselves and flee them. Finally, Proverbs inculcates a strongly communitarian set of likes—that is, the persons it commends are constructive members of the community, valuing and serving its physical and spiritual well-being. This is not surprising, given Proverbs' covenantal orientation, but it is often overlooked in the literature in favour of more individualistic, and even self-serving, readings [29].

### 3. How Psalms 111–112 Function

Now we can begin to show how these rhetorical factors explain how Psalms 111–112 were intended to work together in shaping God's people [30–32].

#### 3.1. Psalm 111

Psalm 111 is commonly called a hymn of praise, that is, a song whose primary aim is to call and enable the worshippers to admire God's great attributes and deeds [33]. Many have noted the "wisdom" element (especially v. 10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding"; compare Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Sir. 1:14). Nevertheless, the dominant theme of the psalm is the mighty deeds that Yahweh has done for the sake of "his people."

In 111:1, the call goes out to the whole congregation: "praise [plural imperative] Yah!" It then moves to the intention that *I*—each member of the congregation, or perhaps a worship leader who sings this to the whole body—will give thanks "in the company of the upright, in the congregation" (in the worshipping assembly). The "works of the LORD" (v. 2) would be his deeds in creation (e.g., 8:3, 6; 104:24), and especially in redeeming his people (e.g., 145:9; Exod. 34:10; Deut. 3:24; 11:7; Dan. 9:14); they are to be "studied" or carefully pondered. These works include providing for "those who fear him" (v. 5; presumably, within Israel), giving the Promised Land to Israel (v. 6), and instructing his people with his "covenant" and "precepts" (vv. 5, 7–8). The sum appears in v. 9, "he sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever"—with the concluding sentiment, "holy and awesome is his name!"

This recitation provides the context in which v. 10 makes sense: "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." The Lord is the one who has done all these wondrous deeds for the sake of his people that the psalm has just recounted; to fear the Lord is the proper response to God's covenant (Deut. 6:2), one of reverent submission and loyalty. The content of the psalm should prevent anyone from feeling that such "fear" is craven; rather, the psalm presents this fear as a privilege, and a response of gratitude.

Further, "wisdom" here is *hokmâ*: a crucial notion of this term is that of "skill" (the nuance in Exod. 28:3), particularly skill in choosing the right path for the desired result [34]. Since the covenantal framework defines what is proper in both the path and the result, we may call this "covenantal wisdom": skill in the art of godly living. The "beginning" of this skill is the reverential response to Yahweh.

#### 3.2. Psalm 112

Psalm 112 starts right where 111 had left off, celebrating the "blessedness" [35] of the "man who fears the LORD." [36]. This person "greatly delights in [the Lord's] commandments" (which are similar to his "precepts," 111:7). In context these are worthy of delight, because they come from the God whose name and works are so awe-inspiring (111:9); but also because this delight motivates such an admirable person as this psalm depicts. Psalm 111 had connected the members of the community

to the community's past—they descend from the eyewitnesses of the great works. Psalm 112 now connects the members to the people's present and future: they care for the poor, whether by generous loans (interest free; compare Deut. 23:19–20) or by outright gifts (112:5, 9); they also expect that their own descendants (“offspring,” 112:2; Hebrew *zera'*, “seed, offspring,” evoking Gen. 17:7) will be valued members of the people's future.

We *may* be inclined to read the description of the “prosperity” of such people as endorsing a mercenary approach to piety on their part. However, it would be better to read it in the light of the whole of Proverbs' instruction on wealth and poverty. For example, in Proverbs, the term *wise* can be co-referential with *diligent*; and, other things being equal, in an agricultural setting such as that of ancient Israel, the diligent family will prosper (Prov. 10:1–5) [37]. Some of the “other things” that must be “equal” in Israel include the overall faithfulness of the community—the absence of which will call forth judgment (e.g., Deut. 11:13–17). We may therefore infer that one goal of the idealized “man who fears the LORD” here is the faithfulness of the whole people. Proverbs further has plenty of its own safeguards against a purely mercenary spirit (e.g., 11:4; 16:8) [38].

### 3.3. The Two Psalms Interact

Now we come back to the striking resonance between Psalms 111–112: in Psalm 111 it is the Lord whose “righteousness endures forever” (111:3), who is “gracious and merciful” (111:4, echoing Exod. 34:6), and whose works are “justice” (111:7), while in Psalm 112 it is the godly person whose “righteousness endures forever” (112:3, 9) and who is “gracious and merciful” (112:4), and who conducts his affairs with “justice” (112:5). Some would place this under the category *imitatio Dei*, that is, the faithful person imitates God [39,40]. Certainly this line of explanation fits with Jewish and Christian admonitions to imitate God's character [41]; but there seems to be something further than this involved. Here, the likeness to God seems to be the result of conscientious attention to, and delight in, the divine commandments, as suggested in Hosea 4:1–2 (where the absence of “faithfulness and steadfast love,” also evoking Exod. 34:6, is due to the lack of “knowledge of God” and the accompanying sins that violate the community). This would correlate with the New Testament idea of humans' transformation, or renewal, toward the image of God (Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18), as the goal of God's work in the world [42].

How do these two psalms together foster an admiration for this kind of person — an admiration that should lead to ever-increasing embrace? Psalm 111, as I said, focuses on the Big Picture of God's acts of redemption for the sake of the covenant people as a corporate entity. Thus it celebrates “the works of the LORD” (111:2), “the power of his works” (v. 6), and “the works of his hands” (v. 7)—in context, these are the works he has done because “he remembers his covenant forever” (v. 5), which covenant formed the corporate entity, the people of God. Indeed, as v. 9 proclaims,

He sent redemption to his people;  
He has commanded his covenant forever.

“Redemption” (*p<sup>e</sup>dūt*, a near synonym to *g<sup>e</sup>'ullā*) [43], is applied to the corporate entity “his people” (*ammō*), as is the covenant. This Big Picture also forms a Big Story, a Grand Narrative or worldview story that should clarify the calling of the ancient Israelite; it recounts the gracious dealings of God in making the world, calling and protecting a people, and fostering the conditions under which its life may flourish (the common referent of “redemption” in the Old Testament).

And yet this corporate notion does not leave the particular persons out: instead it gives them a context in which to live their little stories. The close of this hymn of praise makes that clear (111:10):

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
All those who practice it have a good understanding.  
His praise endures forever!

“The fear of the LORD” is a personal response to his covenant revelation, and as the next psalm shows, works itself out in daily life in each member's Smaller Picture, or Little Story: particularly by

delight in divine commandments (112:1), a character of righteousness, grace, and mercy (112:3–4), dealings with fellow covenant members that are just and generous (112:5, 9). This kind of person experiences the blessing of God, such as “offspring” (112:2), “wealth and riches” (112:3), light in the darkness (112:4), security (112:6–7), triumph over his adversaries (112:8–9)—in other words, he finds in his own life the blessedness of the covenant. He makes a contribution to the community—the same community that is at the centre of the Big Story—and thus the community flourishes; and he and his family flourish as well [44,45].

#### 4. Christian Appropriation

How might a Christian bring these things to bear on daily life in the 21st century? When Christians recite the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed, they confess that the events of Jesus’ arrival, death, and resurrection, together with the spread of the Church, continue the great works of God, ushering in a new stage of the Big Story—a stage in which, now that Jesus has begun his Davidic rule, the Gentiles are receiving God’s light after many years of preparation (as in Matt. 28:18–20; Rom. 1:1–6). Indeed the songs in the opening of Luke’s Gospel tie the arrival of Jesus to this unfolding Big Story of God’s great works (Luke 1:46–55; 68–79; 2:29–32) [46]. So Christians can appropriate the words of these psalms, adapting them of course to this new phase of the story.

At the same time, we must confess that the shape of the Big Story is not readily discernible by ordinary mortals; instead we know that story by faith, by our confidence in the divinely-appointed interpreters [47]. I take as examples a pair of well-known Christians who have explored this point. C. S. Lewis pointed out [48],

There is, to be sure, one glaringly obvious ground for denying that any moral purpose at all is operative in the universe: namely, the actual course of events in all its wasteful cruelty and apparent indifference, or hostility, to life.

Indeed, according to J. I. Packer’s reading of Ecclesiastes, that is precisely the premise of that book: “that this world’s course is enigmatic, that much of what happens is quite inexplicable to us, and that most occurrences ‘under the sun’ bear no outward sign of a rational, moral God ordering them at all.”[49,50] The world’s course baffles us; knowledge of how individual events in our own Little Stories fit into the Big Story is not ordinarily available to us mortals. Such knowledge, however, is not what makes for “wisdom” in the Biblical sense. As Packer further notes ([49], p. 97),

For what is this wisdom that He gives? As we have seen, it is not a sharing in all His knowledge, but a disposition to confess that He is wise, and to cleave to Him and live for Him in the light of His word through thick and thin.

The kind of orientation that Psalm 112 sings about, enables the members of God’s people to take their parts in the unfolding story, and play them well, leaving to God the task of ensuring that everything works together.

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#### References and Notes

1. Throughout this essay, I cite Biblical texts according to the English verse numbers. Further, I will, for the sake of this discussion, take the ESV as a satisfactory rendering of the Hebrew. Further, the term “Wisdom literature” conventionally apply to the Old Testament books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (also called Qohelet), the Song of Songs, and certain psalms, as well as Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) and the Wisdom of Solomon in the Apocrypha.
2. For one example of many, see Rolf Jacobson, and Karl Jacobson. *Invitation to the Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013, pp. 16–17.

3. The other acrostics in the Psalter are: Psalms 9–10; 25; 34; 37; 119; 145. These differ in how much text one must negotiate before the next letter (the others are a full verse or more). Also, the "Davidic" acrostics (9–10; 25; 34; 37; 145) are "imperfect" in how strictly they adhere to the acrostic pattern (e.g., Psalm 34 repeats the *p*-letter at the last verse of the psalm).
4. Roger T. Beckwith. "The early history of the Psalter." *Tyndale Bulletin* 46 (1995): 1–27. carefully lays out the evidence that much of the Psalms' content may well date from before the exile.
5. Most of those who, like me, find the proposed canonical readings unpersuasive, nevertheless recognize "affinity groupings" in the Psalms, such as we have here. Hence Jamie Grant, in posing the alternatives as *either* a haphazard arrangement *or* a purposeful arrangement that a canonical reading can recover, sets an invalid antithesis: Jamie Grant. "The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Gloucestershire, June 2002. p. 13.
6. For discussion, see C. John Collins. "Always alleluia: Recovering the true purpose of the Psalms in the Old Testament context." In *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship*. Edited by Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste. Nashville: B&H, 2012, pp. 17–34.
7. See also John Goldingay. *Psalms, Vol. 1: Psalms 1–41*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.
8. See further Tremper Longman, III. *Psalms*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2014.
9. Shaye J. D. Cohen. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987, p. 42. (see also p. 76).
10. Compare also William McKane. *Proverbs: A New Approach*. London: SCM, 1970, pp. 293–94. (on 3:9): "the wisdom literature is rather far removed from cultic concerns and one would not expect cultic prescriptions to be worked into it."
11. E.g., Katharine J. Dell. "'I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre' (Psalm xlix 4 [5]): A cultic setting for wisdom psalms?" *Vetus Testamentum* 54 (2004): 445–58.
12. See also C. John Collins. "Proverbs and the Levitical system." *Presbyterion* 35 (2009): 9–34.
13. See further Mark Sneed. "Is the 'wisdom tradition' a tradition?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73 (2011): 50–71.
14. Derek Kidner. *Proverbs*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1964.
15. Ernst Wendland recognizes the extrinsic nature of the conventional forms and proposes to classify the various psalms according to their basic speech acts, particularly "eulogy" and "lament" or a combination of these (plus "homily" in Wendland's more recent work). See Ernst Wendland. "Genre criticism and the Psalms." In *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*. Edited by Robert D. Bergen. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994, pp. 374–414.
16. I find Wendland's emphasis on the speech acts that psalms perform to be a salutary one; but that still allows for a grouping of major and minor functions, which results in a list that resembles the conventional forms—as he himself shows, in Ernst Wendland. *Analyzing the Psalms*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2002, pp. 32–60.
17. Probably discussions in genre theory from the linguists and rhetoricians would enrich form criticism of the Psalter: for example, Carolyn Miller argues that "a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish." Carolyn Miller. "Genre as social action." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151–67.
18. See, for example, the critique by James Crenshaw. "Wisdom Psalms?" *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 8 (2000): 9–17.
19. A reply comes from J. Kenneth Kuntz. "Reclaiming Biblical Wisdom Psalms: A response to Crenshaw." *Currents in Biblical Research* 1 (2003): 145–54. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
20. A rejoinder comes from James Crenshaw. "Gold dust or nuggets? A brief response to J. Kenneth Kuntz." *Currents in Biblical Research* 1 (2003): 155–58. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
21. Mowinckel supposed that, for example, the Wisdom Psalms were "a newer, private, learned psalmography" that was added "to the ancient cultic poetry," a supposition that goes beyond our evidence. However, he did acknowledge that "such private poetry came to be included in the present collection of cult psalms, and was even used in the official worship of the Temple." Sigmund Mowinckel. (1962) 2004. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. pp. 106, 114.

22. See further Michael LeFebvre. "Torah-Meditation and the Psalms: The Invitation of Psalm 1." In *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*. Edited by David Firth and Philip Johnston. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005, pp. 213–25.: he supposes that "a wisdom text is supposed to deal with issues outside the cultus," and thus prefers to describe Psalm 1 as a "Torah meditation psalm" if it is to be suited to liturgical usage. I deem this reclassification unnecessary.
23. C. S. Lewis. *The Abolition of Man*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1943, p. 21.
24. C. S. Lewis. *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942, p. 52. The place in Aristotle is probably *Nicomachean Ethics* II.iii.2 (1104b), which speaks of having been trained from childhood to like and dislike the proper things. Some recent studies have helpfully explored the ways in which Proverbs shapes character, without exploring the affection-shaping aspect of the rhetoric.
25. For an example from Proverbs studies, see Christopher Ansberry. "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens? The moral vision of the book of Proverbs and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*." *Hebrew Studies* 51 (2010): 157–73.
26. A further example comes from Anne Stewart. "Wisdom's imagination: Moral reasoning and the book of Proverbs." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40 (2016): 351–72. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
27. Here I am building on Knut Heim. *Like Grapes of Gold Set in Silver: An Interpretation of Proverbial Clusters in Proverbs 10:1–22:16*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001, pp. 81–103.
28. See also Knut Heim. "Coreferentiality, Structure and Context in Proverbs 10:1–5." *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 6 (1993): 183–209. I take his linguistic insights and develop their rhetorical and theological side in my "Proverbs and the Levitical system."
29. For an example R. N. Whybray. *Proverbs*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, p. 63. finds in the admonition to "honour the Lord with your wealth" (3:9–10) "the most blatant expression in the Old Testament of the principle *do ut des* [Latin, *I give that you might give (in return)*]—the offering of gifts to God solely in order to elicit material rewards from him." Rather, these gifts support the ministry of the priesthood, which is essential to the well-being of God's people (at least so far as the Pentateuch is concerned).
30. I will not here say much about the structure of either psalm, other than the acrostic pattern: it seems to me that in both psalms the flow of thought is governed by the demands of the acrostic. For arguments that there is more structure than that, see Beat Weber. "Zu Kolometrie und strophischer Struktur von Psalm 111—mit einem Seitenblick auf Psalm 112." *Biblische Notizen* 118 (2003): 62–67.
31. For another view see Erich Zenger. "Dimensionen der Tora-Weisheit in der Psalmenkomposition Ps 111–112." In *Die Weisheit: Ursprünge und Rezeption*. Edited by M. Fassnacht, Andreas Leinhäupl-Wilke and Stefan Lücking. Münster: Aschendorf, 2003, pp. 37–58.
32. For still another study, see Pierre Auffret. "Essai sur la structure littéraire des Psaumes cxi et cxii." *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980): 257–79.
33. Philip S. Johnston. "Appendix 1: Index of form-critical categorizations." In *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*. Edited by David Firth and Philip S. Johnston. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005, pp. 295–300. helpfully compiles the categorizations from major sources. Some prefer to call it a psalm of thanksgiving, since it opens with "I will give thanks."
34. See David A. Hubbard. "Wisdom." In *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. Edited by I. Howard Marshall, James I. Packer, Donald J. Wiseman and Alan R. Millard. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996, p. 1244a.: "the art of being successful, of forming the correct plan to gain the desired results."
35. There are two Hebrew words commonly generally rendered "blessed": *'ašrê*, as here (technically a noun, "O the blessedness of," but translated into Greek as an adjective), and *bārûk* (the passive participle of the normal verb "to bless"). When applied to a human, there is not much difference between them, except that perhaps *'ašrê* celebrates the true happiness of the person (which here results from God's blessing), while *bārûk* celebrates God's activity of blessing someone (which results in true happiness).
36. The Hebrew term is distinctively "man" (*'iš*). In application it does not exclude women or children; rather, I take the poetic style to stress the concrete example, from which others can learn by applying the *mutatis mutandis* principle.

37. Heim, "Proverbs 10:1–5," has shown the paragraph coherence of Prov. 10:1–5. Unlike Heim, however, I find the message of the paragraph to be that the way in which Yahweh normally "does not let the righteous go hungry" (v. 3) is by instilling diligence in them (vv. 4–5). Conversely, Yahweh "thwarts the craving of the wicked" by allowing their indolence to have its proper consequence. Hence the frustrated "wicked" person also appears in this psalm (112:10).
38. For a careful study of this subject, see Raymond C. Van Leeuwen. "Wealth and poverty: System and contradiction in Proverbs." *Hebrew Studies* 33 (1992): 25–36.
39. For example, Karen Elizabeth Durant. "Imitation of God as a Principle for Ethics Today: A Study of Selected Psalms." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Birmingham, August 2010. pp. 131–33, treats these two psalms under this rubric.
40. A similar approach comes from Raymond C. Van Leeuwen. "Form criticism, wisdom, and Psalms 111–112." In *The Changing Face of Form Criticism*. Edited by Marvin Sweeney and Ehud Zvi. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, pp. 65–84. at p. 84.
41. E.g., Exod. 20:11; Lev. 1144–45; *Letter of Aristeas*, 188, 210; Eph. 5:1; *Letter to Diognetus*, 10:4; Ignatius, *to the Ephesians*, 1:1; idem., *to the Trallians*, 1:2; Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*, 4:2; contrast the shameful imitation of a (false) deity in Justin, *First Apology*, 21:4.
42. This is not the place to enter into evaluation of the various notions of the image of God: Durant, "Imitation of God," 88–102 surveys the discussion, and, oddly given the emphases of her thesis, endorses a functional view, where "human beings are to be God's representative on earth" (102). I do not deny that the functions of ruling and relating are involved; but it is clear—to me at least—that the ruling and relating are to be done in a way that resembles God's own wisdom and benevolence—and thus a description of the image of God must include the moral and intellectual elements if it is to be adequate. (I consider this to be a proper inference from the showing style of Genesis 1, but will have to develop that argument in another venue.)
43. On the synonymy, see Clifford John Collins. "Homonymous Verbs in Biblical Hebrew: An investigation of the role of comparative philology." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Liverpool, May 1988. pp. 62–63.
44. As Longenecker observes, "The view that community and character are informed by narrative is not a novel one"; see Bruce W. Longenecker. "The narrative approach to Paul: An early retrospective." *Currents in Biblical Research* 1 (2002): 88–111.
45. Longenecker mentions Philo, who shows Moses to have been a superior legislator, because he "established a narrative framework that contained and undergirded the legal parameters of Jewish culture (e.g., Deut. 6.20–24; see Philo, *On the Creation of the World* 3; *Life of Moses* 2.47–51)." We might add that Josephus likewise insists that Moses built religion on the narrative of creation, *Antiquities*, 1.18–24.
46. Indeed, Luke 1:68, "he has redeemed his people" (lit. "he has worked redemption for his people," *epoiōsen lutrōsin tō laō autou*), is quite similar to Psa. 111:9 LXX, "he sent redemption to his people" (*lutrōsin apesteilen tō laō autou*).
47. C. S. Lewis. "Historicism." In *Christian Reflections*. Edited by Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, pp. 100–13. while noting that Christianity sees history as "a story with a well-defined plot" (p. 103), shows how unreasonable it is to suppose that one who is not a prophet can interpret how any individual event fits into that story.
48. C. S. Lewis. "De futilitate." In *Christian Reflections*. Edited by Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, pp. 57–71. at p. 69.
49. J. I. Packer. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973, p. 94.
50. An exegetical case for Packer's reading also appears in J. Stafford Wright. "The interpretation of Ecclesiastes." *Evangelical Quarterly* 18 (1946): 18–34. Neither Packer nor Stafford Wright observe that the key word in Ecclesiastes is "find out" (*mātsā*), used in the nuance "find out by research"; but this observation strengthens the case for their reading (see Eccl. 3:10–11; 7:14; 8:17).

