

Jews in Exile: Paradigm for Refining World View

We act on what we believe. The prophet Jeremiah spent some time exhorting the Jews in Babylonian captivity toward right thinking—right world-view. Jeremiah’s goal was to produce in these exile Jews the right mentality, perseverance and endurance which would enable them to maintain their calling as the people of God.

We live in a world in which the effects of the Fall are all too evident. Apart from the more horrendous aspects such as mass killings and warfare, there are smaller sins that ruin our well-being such as rumor, gossip, character assassination, cheating, corruption and power-grabbing. Life in business provides a perfect environment for the practice or resisting of these “smaller” sins, and therefore provides the testing and training ground for many followers of Christ. The world of business corresponds in certain ways to the biblical Babylon in both the Old Testament and the New.

Walter Brueggemann in *Out of Babylon*, states that; “...Babylon comes to occupy a role of enormous importance in Jewish imagination. It is Babylon that destroyed and deported; it is Babylon that becomes (for now) a venue for shalom; and it is Babylon from which the most tenacious Jews intend to depart....Jews perceive Babylon as threat, but then Babylon is also recognized as a viable venue for faithfulness over a long period of time.”ⁱ Brueggemann’s description of Jews in exile in Babylon presents a perfect picture of the Christian’s life in this world, or more specifically, the world of business. We are in exile here, and the world-system is not based upon Christ-like actions or presuppositions. There are many opportunities for sin in the workplace, as well as many opportunities for the imitation of Christ. In a strange way, the

well-being of Babylon may redound to our well-being also. As the prophet Jeremiah exhorted the Jews in exile in Babylon,

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare (Jeremiah 29:4-7).

A quick exit from Babylon may not be possible for us. In the case of the Jews in exile it was not possible. A seventy-year captivity had been determined for them by God. Therefore Jeremiah exhorted them not to listen to the false prophets, the spiritual dreamers, and the easy-answer prognosticators. No! You will be in Babylon a long time. Encourage your children to find spouses. Live to see grand-children and great grand-children. Pray for the rulers and authorities in Babylon, for in Babylon's peace and welfare, you will find peace. The word for peace or welfare in this passage is the famous Hebrew word shalom. Shalom is more than absence of strife. It has the sense of completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment, unimpaired relationships with others and fulfillment in one's undertakings.ⁱⁱ

Business as Context

Following this scriptural line of thinking then, our work in business confronts us with an opportunity to follow Christ. It also confronts us with a temptation. Our release from our Babylonian captivity will come with our death or the second coming of Christ. Until then, the advice of Jeremiah still rings true. Seek the welfare of the city. Seek and practice shalom. Make a way for your children and grand-children to find shalom. Business--the city--Babylon become the great context for following and imitating Christ.

We are now in the most real of real worlds. We are looking for neither physical nor spiritual escape, but we are relating to the life in which God has placed us with no escape into something better. The previous text from Jeremiah calls for more than toleration, but active interaction with the world system—with Babylon! Walter Brueggemann states, “More than simply accommodating Babylon, this text urges coming to terms with the empire as the unavoidable matrix for Jewish well-being. Deported Jews must come to terms with Babylon!”ⁱⁱⁱ

There is, however, a temptation involved in daily interaction with economic Babylon. It is easy to forget what we should be about—namely discipleship, or the imitation of Christ who is praying for us, not to be taken out of the world, but to be kept from the evil one (John 17:14). This is the knife-edge of faith—seeking to worship Christ on the one hand, and being lured into the adoration of Babylon on the other. This is one of the temptations that our Lord underwent during his forty days of fasting in the desert. “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8-9). To have and experience the glories of the kingdoms of the world is an enticing invitation indeed. The glories of the world would include all the magnificent cultural achievements of the nations of the world. This includes art, music, dance, poetry, literature, architecture, government, business, sport, science, technology, and religion. Christ was tempted to be a participant and a model in all of these glories. This offer, Christ turned down. “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’” (Matthew 4:10). Christ is our example here in overcoming this temptation.

Each of us has a defining discipleship moment, maybe more than one. It is a moment when the offer is made to have security, money, advancement, praise—but the price may be

disobedience to the clear voice of the Holy Spirit. The moment when the Holy Spirit says go right, and we go left. The price may be doing wrong. Perhaps the offer comes as a temporary detour from the way of following Christ. In any case, the offer will be clear, not ambiguous. We will understand the terms of the contract clearly.

The imitation of Christ is a daily matter. It consists of all the words and actions that are incumbent on us during the normal round of duties. It is interesting to think about how the imitation of Christ would look in a modern, corporate setting. How would a disciple of Christ conduct herself working for Apple, or the Defense Department? How could a small business owner imitate Christ? How would he go about it? How could an ordinary employee of an ordinary company live the life of Christ in his daily routine? Thomas á Kempis discusses this in a straightforward manner. “It is vanity also to court honor and to be puffed up with pride. It is vanity to follow the lusts of the body and to desire things for which severe punishment later must come. It is vanity to wish for long life and to care little about a well-spent life.”^{iv} The well-spent life in business—in what would this consist? How shall we be intimately involved with the world system, yet not be part of it? Further discussion is in order.

Grace That Is Costly

In his famous book *The Cost of Discipleship* [or more recently published as *Discipleship*] Dietrich Bonhoeffer repeatedly makes the point that the church of his day in Germany of the 1930’s was preaching cheap grace rather than costly grace. Bonhoeffer explains;

Cheap grace means grace as doctrine, as principle, as system....Cheap grace means justification of sin but not of the sinner....Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord’s Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living incarnate Jesus Christ.^v

The result of the preaching of cheap grace is that an individual or a whole nation can suppose that by possessing the principle of grace or the right doctrine of grace that they are, in fact, standing in God's grace. Yet it is true that "...only the believers obey, and only the obedient believe."^{vi} In Christian teaching there is a tendency to separate faith and obedience, so that, faith comes first, then obedience. But if this means "a chronological sequence, that faith would have to come first, to be later followed by obedience, then faith and obedience are torn apart, and the very practical question remains open: when does obedience start?...Faith is only faith in deeds of obedience."^{vii}

Scripture agrees with Bonhoeffer's analysis here. Faith and obedience are not separated but are part of the following of our one Lord. "We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17).

The editors of *Discipleship* mention that Bonhoeffer was influenced by the great Danish philosopher-theologian of the first half of the nineteenth century, Søren Kierkegaard, who wrote; "Not merely in the realm of commerce but in the world of ideas as well, our age is organizing a regular clearance sale. Everything is to be had at such a bargain that it is questionable whether in the end there is anybody who will want to bid."^{viii} In other words, grace may become so cheap that it is no longer desired. In working through the voluminous works of Martin Luther, both men were concerned that modern Christians were reducing God's grace to a principle or a presupposition for further theological analysis. "When grace becomes a principle of righteousness, rather than the outcome of God's gift of righteousness, there is no new existence in Jesus Christ, no boundary between the life of sin and the new life of holiness, no need to

embrace the cross....This was the cheap grace against which Bonhoeffer inveighed.”^{ix} God’s grace calls us to Christ, justifies us, and places us in a life with a person. “So the call to discipleship is a commitment solely to the person of Jesus Christ,...Discipleship is commitment to Christ. Because Christ is the risen Lord, he must be followed. An idea about Christ, a doctrinal system, a general religious recognition of grace or forgiveness of sins does not require discipleship.”^x

There is the possibility of a joyous relationship with the man, Jesus Christ as we live our lives in the business world. Without a real working-out of obedience to Christ, without a real imitation of Christ, Christianity becomes a religion of ideas, intellectualism, mental assent, and sentimentality. It becomes a religion of cheap grace. Surely, a religion of cheap grace would fit in well with the Babylonian world in which we live.

How can we behave in our life in business? How should we behave? Scripture can help, but Scripture is not a book of principles. It contains teaching and advice for specific situations. However, we must discern the situation and the need of the moment. In this we are aided by the Holy Spirit working on our intuition. We are also aided by the Scriptures that we have internalized. The Jews in exile were aided in their struggle to avoid embracing a Babylonian world-view of power, money, prestige and the life of pleasure through the Scriptures.

Practical Help from Solomon

The ancient books of Solomon were helpful for the exile Jews and for us in maintaining a sane view of the world in the midst of our Babylonian culture. Solomon’s wisdom was very broad like the sand on the seashore. He had wide-ranging knowledge of animals and plants. He was a naturalist. He also had artistic and engineering skill as evidenced by the construction of The Temple and his own residence and parks and grounds thereof. He was the able

administrator of an empire and a keen student of human nature as well as a student of the wisdom tradition of neighboring countries. He learned from others as evidenced by the book of Proverbs particularly in chapters 22:17 – 23:11, in which there is a fairly faithful copy from the Egyptian wisdom of Amenemope. Solomon was also humble before the Lord as seen in his prayer for wisdom to govern the people and in his dedicatory prayer for the Temple.

Solomon is presented to us as an example of a man of wisdom. The book of Proverbs, particularly, is associated with wise conduct in business and its lines have been presented in this way in teaching and in business research.^{xi} However, the Book of Proverbs simply presents the way of wisdom. Human conduct and instruction of many kinds is found there. Proverbs covers the waterfront of human life and experience. It is the way of life in many different aspects and situations. However, for the followers of Christ the teachings of our Lord constitute the way of life, particularly as given in the Sermon on the Mount. So, should we not live the Sermon on the Mount in business and know that we are on the Way with Christ? The answer is yes, but there is no conflict here in that one book anticipates the other, and the Sermon on the Mount amplifies Old Testament teaching and particularly the Book of Proverbs. For instance, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5: 3). This is anticipated by “It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Proverbs 16:19). Jesus teaches, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8), which is anticipated by, “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts” (Proverbs 17:3). Proverbs teaches, “The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out” (Proverbs 17:14), to which Jesus amplifies, “Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over

to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny” (Matthew 5:23-26).

Many examples like this can be cited. So there is no conflict in the way of Christ which is also the way of wisdom found in Proverbs. Jesus is the way for the disciple to follow. His teaching about the way guides us in actions of every kind. “The entire gospel message of salvation can be called simply ‘the way’ ...”^{xii}

Solomon is an Old Testament type of Christ and also teaches us about the way. By type of Christ it is meant that Solomon represents Christ particularly in Christ’s wisdom and ascended glory. Christ alludes to Solomon’s glory in the passage about the lilies of the field in the Sermon on the Mount. In the book of 1 Kings, it is reported that the Queen of the South fainted when she beheld Solomon in his glory and his ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord. In other words the scene is Solomon ascending in glory. There is no conflict in the teaching of Solomon about the way of wisdom and the teaching of Christ about the way of discipleship. Our faith in Christ places us in this discipleship way, and there is a tremendous blessing for us in this journey. Solomon states;

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:1-5).

This is the beginning and the end of the way of wisdom. The way begins with the fear of the Lord and ends with the knowledge of God. This is a tremendous goal which continues to motivate the disciple on her long journey. The Proverbs state that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Here in Proverbs 2, as we walk this way of wisdom, we begin to understand the fear of the Lord which

includes respect and attentiveness to what the Lord is saying. It includes trying to put into practice the behavior in which God has instructed us. This is a good beginning, to understand that the fear of the Lord includes behavior and action, not merely emotional states.

Finding the knowledge of God is like finding a treasure hidden in the field. Patience and perseverance are required. The disciple finds that the way of wisdom as found, say, in Proverbs and the Sermon on the Mount is the way of peace, the way of sanctification. Finding the knowledge of God, then, is the result of long years of following this way. One disciple shares with another out of a large storehouse of experiences which illustrate life on the way of wisdom in Babylon.

The Apostle James teaches us that the way of wisdom begins to be ours by experience.

Work in business contains trials, testing and opportunities. As James states;

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways (James 1:2-8).

For us in the business world, the way of wisdom leads straight into everyday business activities—from the mail room to the board room the way of wisdom beckons us with “This is the way, walk in it.” Trials in business are multiform. Human interaction of all kinds provides a test for faith—a faith that acts according to the path of wisdom, the path of discipleship. Testing is hard. We may feel abandoned by God. Indeed, it is reported about King Hezekiah that “...God left him to himself, in order to test him...” (2 Chronicles 32:31). This is the disciple’s opportunity to ask God for wisdom, for discernment in applying and acting upon the teaching of

Christ. The business world is the place where our sanctification takes place. If not there, then where?

Solomon's Ladder: The Practice of Discipleship in Babylon

The ancient Church Fathers Origen and Theodoret of Cyr concluded that the works of Solomon constituted a kind of spiritual ladder—a way of progress in the discipleship life.

It is also necessary to say...that three works belong to Solomon: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. Proverbs offers those interested moral benefit, while Ecclesiastes comments on the nature of visible realities and thoroughly explains the futility of the present life so that we may learn its transitory character, despise passing realities and long for the future as something lasting. The Song of Songs...brings out the mystical intercourse between the bride and the bridegroom, the result being that the whole of Solomon's work constitutes a kind of ladder with three steps—moral, physical and mystical.^{xiii}

Theodoret sees that there is a certain spiritual order to be observed, a certain order of maturity and discipleship. The moral aspect is taught in the Book of Proverbs--doing the appropriate thing at the appropriate time. There is, no doubt, a long period of apprenticeship here—a long period of learning and doing. Character as a disciple of Christ is formed during these years.

Ecclesiastes instructs us in the vanity of impermanent things. The phantasm of our "life's work" is just that—a phantasm. Our name and our work will very soon be forgotten after our death. This knowledge directs us to our future relationship with Christ—as Theodoret names it, "the mystical intercourse between the bride and the bridegroom." The Song of Solomon is very likely a wedding or nuptial poem. This is a staple of Arabic love poetry called *wasf*.^{xiv} Glorious intercourse between the bride and the bridegroom is the theme, but there is a spiritual intercourse in view here also. The Church's traditional interpretation here is a mystical union and communion between the bride of Christ and Christ himself. Traditional Jewish interpretation sees the Song as a relationship between God and Israel and as a sort of "Holy of Holies" of the

Scripture. Rabbi Aqiba (40-137) uses the expression “defile the hands” to describe a book that is holy or canonical. “No man of Israel ever disputed about the Song of Songs, that it did not defile the hands. The whole world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel, for all the Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies;...”^{xv}

So, traveling Solomon’s ladder would encompass an entire life of “finding the knowledge of God.” Proverbs is the book of character formation whether in business or not. For the businessperson it contains a storehouse of guidance. Let’s think about work in business in light of a few of these Proverbs, mainly from the twelfth chapter. “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid” (Proverbs 12:1). Knowledge of the craft, knowledge of the profession, knowledge of the work requires discipline, not only discipline in study but discipline on the job. There is also a kind of on-the-job knowledge. The discipline of the work itself produces a kind of knowledge and experience. Refusal to be teachable places us on the path of foolishness. Older workers, older professionals know more about the job than younger workers. It is wise for the young person to find an older person with wisdom and learn from him. After all “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Proverbs 13:20). The proverbs should not be read as a contract, but as general tendencies—as actions that produce results most of the time. We must leave room for exceptions. After all, God is free in His action concerning each individual life.

Hard work tends to produce definite results, while day-dreaming and get-rich-quick schemes tend to be just that—schemes. “Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense” (Proverbs 12:11). Prudent use of language is the path of wisdom in business while evil language produces evil results. Evil language includes gossip, slander and character assassination. Wise use of the tongue accompanies diligence in

work and these yield good productivity to the business enterprise. “An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous escapes from trouble. From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied with good, and the work of a man’s hand comes back to him” (Proverbs 12:13-14).

The first step in Solomon’s ladder is to learn and practice wise behavior in business and in all aspects of human endeavor and relationship. There is a long time frame of learning here. One develops a store of wisdom teaching as well as a store of experiential knowledge. Personal experience illustrates the truth of the body of wisdom teaching. Observation of others adds to experiential knowledge and provides additional learning opportunities for the disciple of Christ.

The second rung of Solomon’s ladder is a walk in the Book of Ecclesiastes. There are two repetitive phrases in the Book. One is “vanity of vanities,” and the other is “under the sun.” “Vanity of vanities” occurs thirty-five times while “under the sun” occurs twenty-seven times. The theme of vanity has to do with our tasks on earth and the end of life. Our task, our work on earth will one day be completed. Unfortunately, no one will remember our work, and after, say, three generations, no one will remember us. Our names will be utterly forgotten. The end of our strenuous and zealous effort is death followed by complete forgetfulness by posterity. This is the truth about life “under the sun,” or in the world as we know it.

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 is also vanity. 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! So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind (Ecclesiastes 2:15-17).

If we can live for a while in the Book of Ecclesiastes we will see that this is a book of tremendous liberation. The pressure is off. Death is the end of every person regardless of the

building of empires or lack thereof. Within this grim scenario, however, God is interested in our well-being. There are three benefits that are available to the disciple under the sun

“I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man” (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13). Here are enumerated two wonderful benefits: the enjoyment of good food and taking pleasure in work.

If you have ever experienced an illness in which food lost its taste, you know what a discouraging and bizarre experience that is. The wonderful array of food from various cultures and cuisines is a blessing of God for man. The process of work is also a blessing. In building the royal gardens and parks, Solomon states, “...my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11).

It is in the planning and the execution of the work that the pleasure and the joy is found, not necessarily in the finished product. When Solomon beheld the finished product he was reminded that the gardens and parks would also be swept away as the centuries rolled on. There is no permanent project to be constructed on this earth. Therefore, the joy of work is in doing the work itself. “I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with” (Ecclesiastes 3:10). Another benefit of our work is that we have something to do—something to occupy ourselves. This also is a great blessing.

The third great provision for well-being is the joy of married life. “Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:9).

God has a real concern for our well-being. This is part of the discipleship life. The joys of companionship, sexual union, the raising of children are meant for us. The concern and care associated with marriage as well as the pure joy of marriage are meant to be experienced by us in our life under the sun. In an extended commentary on Psalm 119, Dietrich Bonhoeffer discusses the disciple's well-being.

It is God's will that those who walk in his commandments fare well. It is not a sign of a strong and mature faith if we are embarrassed by this sentence, if we say that God intends greater things with us than to care for our well-being. There are Christians who want to be more spiritual than God himself. They like to talk about struggle, asceticism, suffering, and cross, yet it is almost embarrassing to them that the Holy Scripture does not talk exclusively about that, but that it cannot speak often enough about the happiness of the pious, about the well-being of the righteous. They may say that this comes from the Old Testament and is outdated. However, the real reason for their embarrassment lies in the narrowness of their hearts, which cannot grasp the entire kindness of God, being too narrow to praise God in the fullness of the worldly gifts that God bestows on those who live in his laws.^{xvi}

The last step on the Solomonic wisdom way is the teaching of the Song of Songs, the Old Testament Holy of Holies. Following an older, Christian tradition of interpretation, the Song of Songs when viewed Christologically, describes the relation between Christ and His bride, that is, Christ and His Church. For instance,

Athanasius, archbishop of Alexandria, who died in 373, regarded the Song of Songs as a Jubilee song of the church at the incarnation of the Son of God....It is called the Song of Songs because it is the greatest and the last song, celebrating in the present the coming of Christ which other songs regard as future. It is an Epithalamium celebrating the marriage of Him who is the loved of God with human flesh....the book is replete with dialogues between the Son of God and the human race; sometimes between Christ and man in general, and sometimes between Him and his ancient people; sometimes between Him and the Gentile Church, sometimes between the Gentiles and Jerusalem, and sometimes between ministering angels and men.^{xvii}

Physical union and married love is the plain poetic theme of the Song, but it is not far-fetched to see the bridegroom as Christ and the bride as His Church—or possibly the individual believer. Let's look at a few themes from the Song and think about this third rung on Solomon's

ladder. There are at least two maturity themes running through the Song. One is fruit-bearing. The mention of fruit starts with the small blossoms and by the end of the book, mature fruit is being produced. For instance, the potential for fruit is mentioned in Chapter 2, "...the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come,...The fig tree ripens its figs and the vines are in blossom;..." (Song 2:12-13). This is followed by a description of mature fruit, particularly in Chapters 4 and 5 with the description of the garden of the bride. She has the potential and actually produces pomegranates, henna, spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon, frankincense, myrrh, aloes, honey, honeycomb, wine, and milk. In other words fruit-bearing starts small and ends with abundant production.

Another maturity theme is maturity in sexual prowess. The bride begins the song with shyness and timidity. "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely" (Song 2:14). The bride is shy here. She is playing hide-and-seek in the rocks from whence the bridegroom is coaxing her out. Contrast this with, "...my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace" (Song 8:10). The bride grows in voluptuousness and desirability for the bridegroom. How amazing, that Christ's desire is for us.

The last rung in Solomon's ladder is growing maturity and growing knowledge of Christ. This is illustrated through the Song of Solomon. However, growing maturity cannot happen without participation in the first two steps. The first step is character formation, growth of right behavior and discernment. The second step is the apprehension of the futility of striving and the awareness of the reality of death. The life lived through Proverbs and Ecclesiastes prepares us for more intimate communion with Christ. My fulfillment is not in the grandeur of Babylon, but in practical actions appropriate to the exile community—practical actions that honor Christ.

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- ⁱ Walter Brueggemann, *Out of Babylon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010) 9.
- ⁱⁱ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980) 931.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Brueggemann, 8.
- ^{iv} Thomas á Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library) 5.
- ^v Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003) 43-44.
- ^{vi} *Ibid.* 63.
- ^{vii} *Ibid.* 63-64.
- ^{viii} Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Kindle edition, 2012) 12.
- ^{ix} *Discipleship*, 11.
- ^x *Ibid.* 59.
- ^{xi} See for example, Jennifer Dose, "Proverbs: Ancient Wisdom for Contemporary Organizations," *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, **15** 2 Fall 2012, 8-27.
- ^{xii} Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education Underground: 1937-1940* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012) 504.
- ^{xiii} J. Robert Wright and Thomas Oden, eds. *Ancient Christian Commentary of Scripture*, Old Testament, Vol. IX (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press: 2005) 288.
- ^{xiv} Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1980) 56.
- ^{xv} *Ibid.*, 19.
- ^{xvi} Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education* , 500-501.
- ^{xvii} Pope, 117-118.