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THE HOUSE OF FEASTING AND THE HOUSE OF MOURNING: INTERTEXTUAL LINKS BETWEEN ECCLESIASTES AND JOHN IN ESTABLISHING JESUS AS THE CONSUMMATE SAGE

by
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Intertextual links between Ecclesiastes and John have been noted by a few scholars but remain largely unexplored.[2] In this essay I seek to trace out tangible ways that the Gospel writer echoes and alludes to Ecclesiastes in establishing Jesus as the ultimate wise teacher who leads his disciples to find joy in a fallen world beset by death. General links between the books include the mysterious movement of wind (Eccl 11:5; John 3:8), the coming judgment of good and evil (Eccl 12:14; John 5:28–29), and the closing epilogue highlighting the prominent sage/teacher who instructs his disciples with words of authority and truth (Eccl 12:9–14; John 20:30–31; 21:24–25). A specific link may be drawn in the contrast between the house of feasting and the house of mourning in Ecclesiastes 7, a contrast that anticipates Jesus's movement in the first half of John's Gospel. Jesus begins at a house of feasting in Cana and ends at a house of mourning in Bethany. Both miracles (turning water to wine and raising Lazarus from the dead) are unique to John and serve by their uniqueness to highlight Ecclesiastes as a potential literary precursor for this distinctive Johannine material. I argue that Jesus's ministry procession from a house of joyful feasting to a house of mourning for the dead anticipates his own transformative death and resurrection whereby he metamorphoses the grieving of his disciples into the promised eschatological joy to come. These links serve also to reinforce the positive approach to Ecclesiastes as I have argued elsewhere.[3]

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[2]J. E. Bruns, "Some Reflections on Coheleth and John," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (Oct 1963): 414–16; R. Kashow, "Traces of Ecclesiastes in the Gospel of John: An Overlooked Background and a Theological Dialectic," *Neotestamentica* 46 (2012): 229–43.

[3]Kyle C. Dunham, "Intertextual Links between Deuteronomy and Ecclesiastes as a

A close study of John reveals a wisdom orientation, with its focus on the creative-revelatory activity of the Word (John 1:10, 14, 18) and on Jesus as the transcendent Son of Man who exemplifies divine wisdom as a gift from above (3:12–13; 6:50–51; 8:23, 28; 13:3; cf. Prov 8:22; Job 28:20–23).[4] This wisdom perspective lends itself to a nuanced connection to Qohelet and his conclusions concerning the nature of wise living in the matrix of a fallen world. While the epilogue of Ecclesiastes casts Qohelet as an effective and insightful sage who is "full of wisdom" and "truthful words" (Eccl 12:9–10), the epilogue of John's Gospel casts Jesus as the supreme sage about whom the Gospel writer has recorded a true testimony (John 21:24). Qohelet teaches the people words of wisdom given by one Shepherd, an oblique reference to Yahweh (Eccl 12:11).[5] Jesus is himself the Good Shepherd (John 10:11–14), the authoritative, divine teacher who pronounces blessing upon those who believe on him (John 20:29), authenticates his message through signs (20:30), gives life to his disciples (20:31), and discloses himself to them along with the implications of his resurrection (21:1, 14).

While the epilogue of Ecclesiastes acknowledges that the making of books is endless (Eccl 12:12), in John's Gospel Jesus's wisdom exceeds the hypothetical limitation that a finite number of books might impose: "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25).[6] These shared and contrasting themes between the teachers Qohelet and Jesus, and between the writings that revolve around them, encompass a number of fascinating parallels. We will first consider the meaning of intertextuality and allusive modes, where I define literary echo as a precursor to establishing literary links between the writings. I will then turn to explore some general connections between the books to establish the presence of intertextual links. Following this, I will consider how the structure of

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Pointer to Qohelet's Positive Message," *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 6 (2020): 13–57.

[4]On wisdom more generally in the Gospel of John, see H. Moeller, "Wisdom Motifs and John's Gospel," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 6 (1963): 92–99; J. McHugh and G. Stanton, *John 1–4*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 151–52.

[5]A number of interpreters link the Shepherd to Yahweh, drawing upon his singularity formulated in the Shema of Deut 6:4: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (NASB) (Craig G. Bartholomew *Ecclesiastes*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009], 369; Eduard Podechard, *L'Ecclésiaste* [Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1912], 480; J. A. Loader, *Ecclesiastes*, trans. John Vriend [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986], 134). Adding warrant to this connection is the link between another verse in the epilogue (Eccl 12:13—the whole duty of humanity) and the next verse in Deuteronomy (6:5—love Yahweh with all your heart).

[6]Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural citations are from the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

John's presentation of Jesus's public ministry in the first part of the Gospel echoes Ecclesiastes's presentation of wisdom as rising from a sober-minded reflection upon the brevity of life so as to discover the urgency of finding joy in God's good gifts.

The Methodology of Intertextuality

Before surveying the parallels between John and Ecclesiastes, I turn briefly to define the parameters of my approach to intertextuality. Defining intertextuality remains elusive, with little agreement on a standard definition.[7] In addition, many scholars criticize the practitioners of intertextuality for their disregard of the term's origin and meaning, their inconsistent and ill-defined criteria, their errant notions about authors and readers, and their anachronistic assumptions about the literacy of ancient audiences.[8] I subscribe to a conventional taxonomy in recognizing three allusive modes (citation, allusion, and echo) on the basis of clear linguistic markers in the later text.[9] *Literary citation* is the formal or informal rhetorical use of an earlier text by a later author such that the author preserves explicit literary markers from that text.[10] The citation is intentional and objective (i.e., with a definable repetition of collocated terms).[11] It functions to signal the author's in-groupness or

[7]William Irwin, "Against Intertextuality," *Philosophy and Literature* 28 (Oct 2004): 227–28; Samuel Emadi, "Intertextuality in New Testament Scholarship: Significance, Criteria, and the Art of Intertextual Reading," *Currents in Biblical Research* 14 (2015): 9; Fernando Milán, "Biblia e intertextualidad: una aproximación," *Scripta Theologica* 48 (2016): 361.

[8]Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 8; Thomas R. Hatina, "Intertextuality and Historical Criticism in New Testament Studies: Is There a Relationship?" *Biblical Interpretation* 7 (Jan 1999): 42; Douglas Moo, "Paul's Universalizing Hermeneutic in Romans," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11 (Fall 2007): 83–84; Stanley E. Porter, "Allusions and Echoes," in *As It Is Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture*, ed. Stanley Porter and Christopher Stanley (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 29–41; Geoffrey D. Miller, "Intertextuality in Old Testament Research," *Currents in Biblical Research* 9 (2011): 283–309; Leroy A. Huizenga, *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 45; David I. Yoon, "The Ideological Inception of Intertextuality and Its Dissonance in Current Biblical Studies," *Currents in Biblical Research* 12 (2013): 58–76; Russell L. Meek, "Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology," *Biblica* 95 (2014): 280–84.

[9]On the nature of these allusive modes, see John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 64.

[10]Ziva Ben-Porat first identified literary links between texts as "markers" which serve to signify "the simultaneous activation of two texts." She notes the integral connectivity between markers in the evoking text and the larger, independent component or system of the evoked text: "In its manifest belonging to a larger independent system (i.e., the evoked text) the marker maintains the metonymic structure of the relationship of the sign-referent which characterizes all allusions" ("The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 [1976]: 108).

[11]Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*

fluency, to persuade and motivate the audience, and to organize the discourse.[12] A formal literary citation includes a quotation formula (e.g., "it is written"), while an informal citation lacks an introductory marker.

A *literary allusion* is slightly more difficult to discern. It is the freer rhetorical adaptation of an earlier text by a later author in a way that is intentional and recognizable by the audience.[13] For rhetorical effectiveness the evoked source must be traceable and the allusion sufficiently clear to stand out in its new context.[14] A *literary echo* is the most elusive category. Literary echo is the intentional or unintentional rhetorical adaptation of an earlier text by a later author, often due to that text's formulaic shaping of the author's worldview or language.[15] Often literary echoes result from lexical priming, which is the subconscious, accruing record of the context and co-text of a given word or phrase, fixed by an authoritative or widely-known text as in the case of the biblical canon.[16] The echo may be characterized as a fragment or whisper of a previous text, similar in function but fainter in form than the allusion.[17] While there is no clear citation of Ecclesiastes in the Gospel of John, I am interested in the ways that John alludes to and echoes Ecclesiastes both on the textual level and on the thematic-structural level. Before addressing the intertextual links at the thematic-structural level, I will consider several literary echoes of Ecclesiastes in John as well as some shared semantic fields and discourse concepts.

Echoes of Ecclesiastes in the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John echoes Ecclesiastes in at least three places, two of which occur in the context of Jesus's wisdom teaching. First, the

(Leiden: Brill, 2008), 15–17.

[12]Alison Wray, *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16, 93.

[13]Beetham defines allusion as "a literary device intentionally employed by an author to point a reader back to a single identifiable source, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward into the new context" (*Echoes of Scripture*, 20).

[14]The criterion that the allusion must have a single identifiable source does not preclude the combination of sources within a given passage; it simply means that each portion of the allusion should be clearly traceable to its source text.

[15]Beetham defines literary echo as "a subtle, literary mode of reference that is not intended for public recognition yet derives from a specific predecessor" (*Echoes of Scripture*, 24).

[16]On lexical priming, see Michael Hoey, *Patterns of Lexis in Text* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3; idem, *Lexical Priming: A New Theory of Words and Language* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 8–12; idem, "Lexical Priming and Literary Creativity," in *Text, Discourse, and Corpora: Theory and Analysis*, ed. Michael Hoey, Michaela Mahlberg, Michael Stubbs, et al. (New York: Continuum, 2007), 7–8; Michael Pace-Siggs, *Lexical Priming in Spoken English Usage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 1–3.

[17]Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 21.

Gospel of John echoes Ecclesiastes in Jesus's analogy between the invisible, sovereign work of the Spirit and the enigmatic procession of the wind. In John 3 Jesus holds a night-time conversation with the Pharisee Nicodemus. In response to Nicodemus's query about how a man might be born again, Jesus replies by pointing to the Spirit's powerful yet unseen work, comparable to the wind: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The use of the term πνεῦμα for "wind" here is unusual in the NT, where the term ἄνεμος is more common.[18] Although the notion of the mysterious movement of the wind appears elsewhere in ancient wisdom literature (Prov 30:4; Sir 34:2; 1 Enoch 41:3),[19] Jesus's statement corresponds most closely to Qohelet's reflections on the enigmatic procession of the wind/spirit: "Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things" (Eccl 11:5, NASB).

The semantic overlap of "wind" and "spirit" in the Hebrew term רוּחַ corresponds to the term πνεῦμα in the Gospel account, leading to some interpretive ambiguity concerning its meaning. Several connections, however, tie together the texts and suggest that "wind" is the more appropriate gloss. First, the semantic fields of "knowing" (LXX Eccl 11:5, γινώσκω; John 3:8, οἶδα) and "wind" (πνεῦμα) occur in close proximity in both passages. In both cases the statement emphasizes what the listener does *not* know, using the invisible wind as an analogy. In Ecclesiastes, the reader does not know "the path of the wind" (LXX: ἡ ὁδός τοῦ πνεύματος), while in John he is ignorant of "the path" on which the wind is coming or going. Jesus's statement that "the wind blows wherever it wishes" calls to mind Qohelet's earlier reflection that "the wind blows to the south and turns to the north; the wind goes round and round, and it always returns to its course" (Eccl 1:6). Hence the larger backdrop in Ecclesiastes concerning the cycles of wind has affinities with Jesus's description of the wind in John. Second, both texts include a reference to pregnancy or birth. Qohelet compares his readers' ignorance of the wind to their ignorance of how bones are formed in the womb of an expectant mother. In the Gospel Jesus compares ignorance of the wind to an unawareness of the Spirit-produced new birth (with γεννάω, "to beget, bear"). Third, both texts focus on the sovereign—often invisible—work of God as illustrated by the mysterious and unseen motion of the wind. Qohelet uses the analogies of the wind and human fetal growth as pointing to God as the maker of

[18]The term ἄνεμος occurs 31 times in the NT, while the use of the term πνεῦμα for "wind" occurs only twice (John 3:8; Heb 1:7). See BDAG, s.v. "πνεῦμα," 832, and the discussion in Kashow, "Traces of Ecclesiastes in the Gospel of John," 232.

[19]Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 124–25.

everything, using the familiar creational terminology of עשׂה/ποιέω ("to do, make"). Similarly, in John 3:8 the passive participle of γεννάω stresses the monergistic work of the Spirit who mysteriously creates life in the one who is begotten of him.

Second, the Gospel of John evokes Ecclesiastes in Jesus's description of the future judgment upon the good and the evil. In John 5:28b–29 Jesus calls attention to this future judgment in the context of the resurrection of the dead: "An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." His remarks correspond closely to the closing verse of Ecclesiastes: "For God will bring every activity into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl 12:14). In both texts there appear a number of similar elements, including the quality of good contrasted with the quality of evil, the criterion of good or evil deeds (ποιέω/ποίημα), and the decisive act of divine, eschatological judgment (κρίσις) (cf. also 2 Cor 5:10). Ecclesiastes 12:14 (LXX) and John 5:29 are, in fact, the only texts in the Greek Bible to collocate the term κρίσις ("judgment") with the contrasting adjectives "good" and "evil." The term ἀγαθός ("good") appears in both texts, although the word for evil varies (πονηρός in Eccl 12:14 and φαῦλος in John 5:29). Both judgment announcements occur likewise in the context of death and its implications (John 5:19–29; Eccl 12:1–7). The main distinction between the writings is that whereas God metes out the judgment in Ecclesiastes 12:14, Jesus exacts judgment in John 5:29—a contrast that affirms Jesus's divine nature and standing as the eschatological judge.

Third, the epilogue of the Gospel of John mirrors closely the epilogue of Ecclesiastes. Robert Kashow has identified numerous affinities in the sequence of the epilogues of the two books:[20]

Common Features	**Ecclesiastes 12:9-12**	**John 21:24-25**
Unidentified Teacher	Besides the fact that **Qohelet** was wise,	This is the **disciple**
Teaching and Writing	still he **instructed** the people in knowledge; and he **tested,** thoroughly **explored,** and **arranged** many proverbs.	who **testifies** about these things and has **written** these things,
Words of Truth	Qohelet sought to find pleasing words, and to correctly write **words of truth**.	and we know that his **testimony** is **true**.

[20]Kashow, "Traces of Ecclesiastes in the Gospel of John," 231.

Common Features	Ecclesiastes 12:9-12	John 21:24-25
Many Instructional Actions/Sayings Collated from the Authoritative Sage	The **words of the wise** are like goads; and like nails that are firmly secured are the **collected sayings**. They are given by **one Shepherd**.	And there are also **many other things** that **Jesus** did
Limitations of the Study from Finite Inability to Grasp Endless Books	But beyond them, my son, be instructed, "to the **making of many books**, **there is no end**." And "constant study tires the body."	which if written as a detailed list, I suppose that **not even the world itself could contain the books** which are written.

Although the correlation in this case is largely thematic and not verbal, the similarity in arrangement is striking. These conclusions tie in with a larger pattern of canonical closure formulas in Scripture. Canonical closure passages close off significant portions of Scripture with an affirmation of its truth and authority and a warning against adding to its words: Deuteronomy 34:1–12 (Torah); Malachi 4:4–5 (Prophets); and Revelation 21:18–21 (NT). These canonical closures elevate an exemplary prophet-teacher, who foreshadows the Messiah or is the Messiah (Moses, Elijah, Solomon, Jesus). These closures emphasize the divine origin of the message, underscore the truthfulness and authority of the teacher's words, warn of the uniqueness and exclusivity of their writings as Scripture, and orient the reader toward the eschatological fulfillment of the words and teaching. Both Ecclesiastes and John conclude with the aim of their writing: to provide a distillation of a divine teacher's true and faithful wisdom intended to aid the wearied yet diligent disciple toward life and truth. From a macro-canonical perspective, the potential link suggested here between the "one shepherd" of Ecclesiastes and Jesus's role in John's epilogue offers a preliminary affirmation that the one shepherd in Ecclesiastes carries divine and Messianic connotations.

Shared Semantic Fields and Discourse Concepts

Beyond these literary connections, Ecclesiastes and the Gospel of John hold in common a few other thematic and semantic affinities. First, Ecclesiastes and John share an interest in epistemology, although the nucleus of epistemological terms is greater in John.[21] Kashow has

[21]Ibid., 234–37. For epistemology in the Gospel of John, see especially C. Bennema, "Christ, the Spirit and the Knowledge of God: A Study in Johannine Epistemology," in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God*, ed. M. Healy and R. Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007). Bennema places John's

charted the high concentration of epistemological language in the Fourth Gospel:

Epistemic Vocabulary	Total Usage in John's Gospel	Total Usage in All Four Gospels	Comparative Percentage (John/ Gospels)	Total Usage in the NT	Comparative Percentage (John/NT)
ἀλήθεια	25	32	78%	109	30%
ἀληθινός	9	10	90%	27	33%
ἀληθής	14	16	88%	26	54%
βλέπω	17	68	25%	132	13%
γινώσκω	57	117	49%	222	26%
θεάομαι	6	15	40%	22	27%
θεωρέω	24	40	60%	58	41%
οἶδα	84	154	55%	318	26%
ὁράω	82	298	28%	438	19%
πιστεύω	98	132	74%	241	41%
σκοτία	8	10	80%	16	50%
τυφλός	16	46	35%	50	32%
φῶς	23	38	61%	73	32%

Likewise, the epistemological orientation and vocabulary of Ecclesiastes is well-established.[22] While assessing Qohelet's epistemology is more

epistemological language into ten categories: (1) epistemic darkness terms, (2) illumination/enlightenment terms, (3) Jesus's revelation/teaching terms, (4) saving truth terminology, (5) sensory perception terms, (6) cognitive perception terminology, (7) phrases concerning the Spirit as cognitive agent, (8) terms related to the people's response, (9) terms characterizing the relationship between the Father and the Son, and (10) terms characterizing the relationship of the believer with the Father and the Son. Categories 1–6 have an analogous function in Ecclesiastes.

[22]Although anachronistic to apply the term *epistemology* in its classic, Western sense to Ecclesiastes, I am interested here in evaluating Qohelet's reflections on "the possibility and nature of knowledge—of God and his world" or, more specifically, his reflections on "how people go about knowing God and the world" (R. O'Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature*, Forschungen zur Religion and Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 225 [Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009], 1–2). See Fox, "Qohelet's Epistemology," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 58 (1987): 137–55; idem, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, 79–120; Crenshaw, "Qoheleth's Understanding of Intellectual Inquiry," in *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom*, ed. A. Schoors (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1998); A. Schellenberg, *Erkenntnis als Problem: Qohelet und die alttestamentliche Diskussion um das menschliche Erkennen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002); R. O'Dowd, "A Cord of Three Strands: Epistemology in Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes," in *The*

complex than simply compiling a list of key terms, the chart below demonstrates that Ecclesiastes, like John, possesses an array of epistemic words.[23] These percentages are best put in context by bearing in mind that Ecclesiastes contains approximately 500 Hebrew words, comprising nearly 28% of the biblical wisdom corpus (Job-Proverbs-Ecclesiastes) and a little more than 1% of the Hebrew Bible.

Epistemic Vocabulary	Total Usage in Ecclesiastes	Total Usage in Job, Prov, & Eccl	Comparative Percentage (Eccl/Wisdom Literature)	Total Usage in OT	Comparative Percentage (Eccl/OT)
סָכְלוּת/סכל	13	13	100%	24	54%
חֶשְׁבּוֹן/חִשָּׁבוֹן	4	4	100%	5	80%
תור	3	5	60%	24	13%
ראה	47	112	42%	1310	4%
למד (Piel)	1	3	33%	58	2%
חָכְמָה/חָכָם	52	181	29%	328	16%
בקשׁ	6	22	27%	225	3%
מצא	17	64	27%	457	4%
לֵב	41	158	26%	601	7%
חֹשֶׁךְ	8	37	22%	98	8%
ידע/דַּעַת	42	199	21%	952	4%

The challenge, however, in correlating this data and silhouetting it against the Gospel of John lies not merely in identifying similar vocabulary but also in discerning whether this vocabulary points to a common epistemological method. Fox designates Qohelet's method as "empirical," suggesting that Qohelet obtains and validates his knowledge

Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God, ed. M. Healy and R. Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007); idem, "Epistemology in Ecclesiastes: Remembering What It Means to Be Human," in *The Words of the Wise Are Like Goads* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 195–217; Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 269–77; A. Pinker, "Ecclesiastes, Part II: Themes," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 41 (2013): 163–70; Jaco Gericke, "A Comprehensive Philosophical Approach to Qohelet's Epistemology," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 71 (2015): 1–9.

[23]I derive these epistemic terms from Fox, "Qohelet's Epistemology," 137–55; Crenshaw, "Qoheleth's Understanding of Intellectual Inquiry," 215–24; O'Dowd, "Epistemology in Ecclesiastes," 195–217. Fox discusses the semantic range of many of these terms as to how they define the nature of intellectual pursuit.

through experience alone.[24] Crenshaw disputes this conclusion, arguing that Qohelet champions an array of non-experiential affirmations that include assertions about the nature of God, universalities concerning human nature, and declarations about the "unknowable" future.[25] Seow too observes that while Qohelet is concerned principally with the human condition, it is more precisely with the human condition as it concerns the transcendent God. As sovereign Creator, God has established the possibilities and limits of what it means to be human.[26] While Qohelet falls short of formulating his methodology for epistemology, he governs his approach to knowledge and truth in keeping with the divinely-imposed prescriptions of Torah. His pursuit of wisdom is circumscribed by the boundaries of the created order as prescribed by the authoritative creation/fall narrative of Genesis and the function of obedience and the fear of God in Deuteronomy.[27]

Recognition of this cosmic order, however, for Qohelet is also experiential and inductive; it transcends fiat to materialize through wise observation and participation within the limits the authoritative Creator has imposed.[28] Ecclesiastes and John, equally grounded in the norms of previous Scripture and in their respective observations about the physical world, share salient points of method. Both show a keen interest in visual observation as an important affirmation of truth, evident in the frequent terms for seeing or vision: ראה, βλέπω, θεάομαι, θεωρέω, and ὁράω. Both concern themselves with aspects of knowing, perceiving, and understanding wisdom, as in the common terms דַּעַת/ידע, חָכְמָה/חָכַם, γινώσκω, and οἶδα. Both invite the pursuit of cognitive discovery with the keywords מצא, בקשׁ, תור, and εὑρίσκω (8x in John), as well as the frequent Johannine invitations to "come and see" (1:39, 46;

[24]Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, 79–120. It is apparent that here, as in his definition of *hebel*, Fox is influenced more by his cultural milieu than he admits. Positing that a non-Western, pre-modern, pre-Cartesian epistemology is empirical as defined by seeking validation solely through one's individual experience is doubtful (cf. Sneed, "הבל as 'Worthless' in Qoheleth," 879–94).

[25]Crenshaw, "Qoheleth's Understanding of Intellectual Inquiry," 212–13. Bartholomew concurs with Crenshaw against Fox and thus prefers the classification of "autonomous" in that Qohelet uses both experience *and* reason in delineating his epistemological conclusions (*Ecclesiastes*, 271). We would argue instead that Qohelet begins with the divine revelation of Torah as his primary starting point and filter.

[26]Choon-Leong Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 59–60. Cf. O'Dowd, "Epistemology in Ecclesiastes," 195.

[27]R. C. Van Leeuwen affirms that "the fear of the Lord is the key to Israel's epistemology…for knowing the Creator puts one in position appropriately to know the creation and humans with their divinely given possibilities and limits" (*Dictionary for the Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, s.v. "Wisdom Literature," 849).

[28]O'Dowd concludes, "We still find a strong sense that ethics and knowledge are grounded in the cosmic order of Yahweh's creation. Knowledge, therefore, is intrinsically participatory, or a product of discovering God and his world by living in it" (*The Wisdom of Torah*, 3).

4:29; 11:34). Likewise, both epilogues validate these observations, perceptions, and discoveries through the wise teaching and actions of a leading sage who establishes truth and evokes pious faith. John expresses his purpose as evoking this type of belief: "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Pious faith in Ecclesiastes is cast as fearing God (Eccl 12:13), the OT designation for a life of reverent faith and obedience. This summons to pious faith resonates as the final charge of the book and constitutes the anticipated response from the diligent and wise reader. Beyond these similarities, there are also several differences. Qohelet places greater emphasis than John on his own observation and discovery, as evident in the prevalence of first-person verbs, particularly in 1:12–2:26. Qohelet also contrasts his positive affirmations more frequently with a negative polarity by pointing to elusive matters that cannot be known or discovered. In the end, whichever philosophical designations are used to define Qohelet's epistemology, both Ecclesiastes and John share a primary concern for the pursuit of knowledge and truth. These qualities find their grounding in the authoritative observations of a sage teacher who discloses divine revelation.

Beyond epistemology, both Ecclesiastes and John, in the second place, underscore *joy* as the desired outcome of heeding their respective messages. The frequency with which Qohelet commends joy is noticeable (Eccl 2:24–26; 3:12–13, 22; 5:17–19; 8:15; 9:7–10; 11:7–12:1) as well as the increasing emphasis with which these summons to joy are formulated as the book progresses.[29] The recurring calls to joy include the concepts of "seeing good" (2:1, 24; 3:13; 5:17), "doing good" (3:12), being "satisfied by the good" (6:3), "being in (the) good" (7:14), and "seeing life" (9:9). Likewise, the Gospel of John focuses on the desirability of joy in the life of the believer and disciple of Christ. Gert J. C. Jordaan has demonstrated that joy constitutes a key structural component and theme for the Gospel of John. The theme of joy develops spirally along temporal lines moving from the joy of Abraham in foreseeing Jesus's day (8:56), to the joy of John the Baptist at the inauguration of Jesus's day (3:29), to the joy of his disciples in grasping the significance of Jesus's teaching (15:11), and to the ultimate joy they experience in understanding the significance of Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension (14:28; 16:20–24; 17:13; 20:20).[30] Jesus is identified in the Gospel as the bridegroom (John 3:29), who consummates the prophesied eschatological union of Israel in the context of the end-times Messianic marriage feast (Matt 9:15; 25:1–13; Mark 2:19–20; Luke 5:34; Rev 19:6–9).[31] The theme of joy revolves principally in

[29]R. N. Whybray, "Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 23 (1982): 87–98.

[30]Jordaan, "The Joy of Seeing Christ: A Thematic Study of Joy in the Gospel of John," *In die Skriflig* 49 (2015): 1–9.

[31]Christopher Blumhofer, "The Voice of the Bridegroom in John 3:29 and in the

John around the χαίρω/χαρά and ἀγαλλιάω word groups, appearing 20 times in the Gospel (3:29; 4:36; 5:35; 8:56; 11:15; 14:28; 15:11; 16:20–22, 24; 17:13; 19:3; 20:20). In addition, the theme of joy—more frequently than in any other Gospel—is grounded in the disciples' own possession of joy (15:11; 16:20–24; 17:13). In this way both Ecclesiastes and John share an outlook governed by joy that springs from a personal and abiding knowledge of God. Having established a number of lexical correspondences, I turn now to the structural ties between Ecclesiastes 7 and the literary structure of the first part of John's Gospel in order to highlight conceptual similarities in the progression toward greater wisdom.

The Literary Structure of Ecclesiastes 7

In Ecclesiastes 7, Qohelet shifts from his consideration of the darker side of divine providence in chapter 6 to offer a glimpse into his own recommendations for navigating the pitfalls of a fallen world through a series of better-than sayings in 7:1–14. This is the longest chain of such sayings in the OT, and this chapter has been deemed among the most difficult of the book due to the challenge of discerning literary connections or a clear sequence.[32] Many scholars consider vv. 1–14 to constitute a single unit in two parts (vv. 1–8, 9–14), as evident in the higher concentration of the term טוֹבָה/טוֹב ("good") (10x) (vv. 1a, 1b, 2, 3, 5, 8a, 8b, 10, 11, 14).[33] Other catchwords likewise provide cohesion to the series of proverbs.[34] The twofold repetition of "day" (יוֹם) in verses 1 and 14 frames the unit. Much debate surrounds whether the passage reflects outside voices, with suggestions such as a compilation of literary glosses,[35] a dialogue between Qohelet and traditional wisdom,[36] or a

Context of Jewish and Christian Literature," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 34 (2024): 329–44.

[32]Graham S. Ogden and Lynell Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 214; Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1851), 206.

[33]Roland E. Murphy, "A Form-Critical Consideration of Ecclesiastes VII," *Society of Biblical Literature Abstracts and Seminar Papers* (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974), 79; A. G. Wright, "The Riddle of the Sphinx: The Structure of the Book of Qoheleth," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968): 330; A. G. Wright, "The Riddle of the Sphinx Revisited: Numerical Patterns in the Book of Qoheleth," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980): 49.

[34]These catchwords beyond "good" (טוֹב) include "day" (יוֹם) (vv. 1 [2x], 14 [2x]); "heart" (לֵב) (vv. 2, 3, 4 [2x], 7); "house of mourning" (בֵּית־אֵבֶל) (vv. 2, 4); "grief/anger" (כַּעַס) (vv. 3, 9 [2x]); "fool" (כְּסִיל) (vv. 4, 5, 6, 9); and "wise/wisdom" (חָכְמָה/חָכָם) (vv. 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12 [2x]).

[35]Podechard, *L'Ecclésiaste*, 365–67; George A. Barton, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 139.

[36]Norbert Lohfink, *Qoheleth*, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 91–93; Roland E. Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1992), 62–63.

diatribe between Qohelet and an interlocutor.[37] I follow Jean-Jacques Lavoie in concluding, against these views, that there are no formal markers in the passage to indicate that Qohelet is sparring with an interlocutor or that he deviates from his own themes and vocabulary found elsewhere in the book.[38]

These verses form, at least in part, an answer to the questions posed at the end of the previous chapter (6:12): "Who knows what is *good* for a person during his lifetime, the few days of his puzzling life, which he passes like a shadow?" Those questions anticipate a negative answer: no one can definitively discern what is good for each individual nor can anyone foretell the future. Yet Qohelet now begins to offer his own preliminary, if qualified, response, springing from his reflection on what is "good" and the brevity of life. Faced with human mortality and the negative effects of the fall, Qohelet points to preferable courses of action. He opens the unit with the comparative expression "better than" (טוֹב…מִן), a formula that occurs expressly or by ellipsis seven times (vv. 1a, 1b, 2, 3, 5, 8a, 8b). Within these better-than sayings, Qohelet prioritizes seven virtues worthy of attainment as an offset to wisdom's limitations due to the sin-curse: a good name (v. 1a), a good legacy at death (v. 1b), sobriety (v. 2), seriousness of purpose (vv. 3–4), temperance/self-control (rebuke rather than laughter) (vv. 5–7), steadfastness (v. 8a), and even-temperedness/humility (slow in spirit vs. haughty in spirit) (v. 8b). Several of these qualities anticipate Jesus as the greater sage in the Gospel of John, as Jesus possesses a good name worthy of belief (John 1:12; 3:18), will secure a worldwide legacy at his death (12:32–33), carries sobriety and seriousness of purpose (11:33–38), exhibits self-possession in his rebuke of others (3:10; 6:59–66; 7:24; 8:23–24; 12:40), demonstrates steadfastness in fulfilling his mission (13:1; 19:28–30), and displays humility of spirit in seeking the glory that comes from God rather than from people (5:41–44; 12:43).

[37]Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Kohelet*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 369–70. Schwienhorst-Schönberger argues that Qohelet cites interlocutors' opinions in vv. 1–6a and reflects critically on these views in vv. 6b–10. He contends that the first six verses contain sentiments at odds with Qohelet's other calls to rejoice as well as other calls to turn away from vexation (9:7–9; 11:9–10), which he here seems to commend (7:3).

[38]J.-J. Lavoie, "La philosophie comme réflexion sur la mort: Étude de Qohélet 7,1–4," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 54 (1998): 94–97.

Qohelet's Value Statements in Ecclesiastes 7:1–8 Anticipating Jesus in John				
Saying	**Verse**	**Value**	**Expression**	**Consummation in Jesus**
1	1a	Good name	"Better a good **name** than **fine ointment**"	"To all who…believed in his **name**, he gave the right to become children of God" (1:12). "Mary took a pound of **expensive ointment**…and anointed the feet of Jesus" for his burial (12:3–7)
2	1b	Secured legacy	"Better the **day of death** than the day of birth"	"The **day of my burial**" (12:7). "When I am **lifted up** from the earth, I will draw all people to myself" (12:32)
3	2	Sobriety	"Better to go to the **house of mourning** than the house of feasting"	"Lazarus **has died**" (11:14). "When Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been **in the tomb** four days" (11:17)
	2b	*Rationale ("because"):*	"The living will **gain wisdom**"	"Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you **may believe**" (11:14–15)
4	3	Seriousness of purpose	"Better **grief** than laughter"	"Jesus was **deeply moved** in his spirit and **greatly troubled**" (11:33)
	3b-4	*Rationale ("for"):*	"Sober reflection brings **deeper joy**"	"You have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your **hearts will rejoice**, and no one will take your joy from you" (16:22)
5	5	Temperance	"Better to listen to the wise person's **rebuke** than the music of fools"	"Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?" (3:10). "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" (12:40)
	6	*Rationale ("for"):*	"**Foolish laughter** is empty and fleeting"	In the other Gospels, the mourners **laugh** at Jesus before he raises the dead (Matt 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53)[39]

[39]William B. Bowes demonstrates that many interpreters see John as literarily dependent on the Synoptic Gospels and as presupposing the readers' familiarity with the

Qohelet's Value Statements in Ecclesiastes 7:1–8 Anticipating Jesus in John				
Saying	**Verse**	**Value**	**Expression**	**Consummation in Jesus**
	7	*Rationale ("for"):*	"**Folly can corrupt** the unwary wise"	"The Pharisees answered them, 'Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him?'" (7:47–48)
6	8a	Steadfastness	"Better **the end of a matter** than its beginning"	"Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them **to the end**" (13:1)
7	8b	Patience	"Better a patient spirit than a **haughty spirit**"	"I do not **receive glory from people**.… How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes only from God?" (5:41, 44)

The repetition of the wording "house of mourning" and "heart" in Ecclesiastes 7:2 and 4 marks out the first of two smaller segments within the sub-unit: (1) reputation and legacy in the face of encroaching death (vv. 1–4) and (2) temperance and endurance in the face of distractions and folly (vv. 5–8). Lavoie characterizes the first segment as consisting of five "micro-stories" or proverbs (vv. 1a, 1b, 2a, 3a, 4) and two commentaries introduced by "for/because" (כִּי/בַּאֲשֶׁר) (vv. 2b, 3b).[40] I would add that the second segment likewise consists of three micro-stories (vv. 5, 8a, 8b) and two commentaries (vv. 6, 7). These commentaries provide the rationale for three assertions that seem to run counter to reality: (1) mourning is better than feasting (v. 2a); (2) grief is better than laughter (v. 3a); and (3) listening to the wise person's rebuke is better than listening to the music of fools (v. 5). How can these sayings be true if Qohelet elsewhere asserts that people are to find enjoyment in a fallen world? His rationales ground these affirmations in profounder, more elusive truths: (1) sobriety brings greater wisdom (v. 2b); (2) grief leads to deeper joy (v. 3b); (3) foolish laughter is empty and fleeting (v. 6); and (4) folly can corrupt the unwary wise person (v. 7).

His tone shifts to the imperative mood in vv. 9–14. Here he

latter ("The Relationship Between John and the Synoptic Gospels Revisited," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 66 [2023]: 113–32). In this case John may anticipate that readers correlate foolish laughter as a precursor to his raising the dead as in the other Gospels.

[40]Lavoie, "Étude de Qohélet 7,1–4," 98.

exhorts the reader through a series of five jussives/imperatives. In view of the priorities he has established, the reader must pursue or avoid certain patterns of conduct: (1) "do not be hasty" (אַל־תְּבַהֵל) (v. 9); (2) "do not say" (אַל־תֹּאמַר) (v. 10); (3) "see/consider" (רְאֵה) (v. 13); (4) "be [joyful]" (הֱיֵה) (v. 14a); and (5) "see/consider" (רְאֵה) (v. 14b). The hinge for the sub-unit is a variation of the better-than saying in v. 11: Wisdom is as good as an inheritance. Here he compares two items, both of which constitute value in differing ways. The sub-unit carries its own conclusion, with a commendation of joy in vv. 13–14 based in the wise person's recognition of God's sovereign hand. Joy rises from sober reflection: the reader is to consider God's mysterious, unalterable work (v. 13) so that, in recognition of God's sovereignty the reader may find joy in the day of goodness (טוֹבָה) and contemplate reality in the day of evil/calamity (רָעָה) (v. 14).

Together these sayings have to do with the right application of wisdom principles in the face of disillusionment and the uncertainties of a fallen world. Qohelet ends the first unit of chapter 7 with a statement about human inability to know the future (7:14), just as he ended chapter 6.[41] Verse 15 marks the shift to the next section (vv. 15–24), with its return to the first-person *qatal* verbs ("I have seen") that frame the following unit (vv. 15, 23). The presentation of the sage Qohelet's values and commendations anticipates much of Jesus's ministry and teaching, anticipating John's presentation of Jesus as the consummate sage. We turn now to this portrayal in the Gospel.

The Literary Structure of John 1–12

Interpreters often recognize four distinct sections in the Gospel of John: (1) The prologue (1:1–18); (2) the Book of Signs (1:19–12:50); (3) the Book of Glory/Exaltation (13:1–20:31); and (4) the epilogue (21:1–25).[42] The two main parts each conclude with a summary expressing the purpose of the narratives in the preceding section (12:37–50; 20:30–31). Book One, John 1–12, has been called in various places the Book of Signs. It records the miracles and prophetic sign-acts that Jesus performed in order to authenticate his message as the greater Moses, the incarnate Son of God, and the promised Messiah. This section revolves around the public ministry of Jesus conducted from an obscure location, the village of Cana, to a prominent location, the city of Jerusalem. Book Two, John 13–20, has been called variously the Book of

[41]Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 180.

[42]See Murray J. Harris, *John*, B&H Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 10–11; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 32–33; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 103–4.

Glory[43] or Exaltation.[44] The latter section climaxes with the passion narrative, in which Christ is paradoxically "lifted up"—exalted and glorified first through his crucifixion, then through his vindicatory resurrection and ascension. This section of the Gospel highlights the private ministry of Jesus, beginning and ending with the disciples in a secluded room in Jerusalem. In this part, his atoning death serves to redeem his people from all nations and to accomplish the work which the Father has sent him to do.

In the Book of Signs interpreters often recognize seven signs which serve to authenticate Jesus's message and to unveil his coming glory: (1) the changing of water to wine (2:1–11); (2) the cleansing of the temple (2:14–17); (3) the healing of the official's son (4:43–54); (4) the healing of the lame man (5:1–15); (5) the feeding of the multitude and walking on water (6:1–21); (6) the healing of the blind man (9:1–7); and (7) the raising of Lazarus (11:38–44).[45] Signs 1–3 form a Cana-to-Cana cycle that carries a chiastic arrangement:

A Messianic sign: Water to wine (Cana miracle) (2:1–12)
  B Renovated worship: Messiah cleanses and embodies the temple (2:13–22)
    C Salvation: God loves and gave his Son to grant eternal life (3:1–36)
  B' Renovated worship: Worship in Jerusalem / worship in spirit and truth (4:1–42)
A' Messianic sign: Healing official's son (Cana miracle) (4:43–54)

The second cycle of signs (4–7) is often called the Festival cycle, as it opens with an unnamed festival (5:1) and moves through the yearly festival cycle, beginning with the spring-time Passover (6:4), the autumnal Sukkot/Booths (7:2), the winter-time Hanukkah/Dedication (10:22), and back to the following Passover (12:1).[46] The Festival cycle differs in thematic emphasis from the Cana cycle, as Kim notes, "Whereas the Cana Cycle reveals Jesus as the divine Messiah and emphasizes the importance of believing in Him to receive life, the Festival Cycle develops the theme of increasing opposition by the Jewish leaders toward Jesus."[47] The scene shifts from the region of Galilee and a

[43]Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 541–42.

[44]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 167–68.

[45]There is considerable debate over which acts comprise the seven signs in John, but here I follow Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Seventh Johannine Sign: A Study in John's Christology," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 87–103. The background of the OT prophetic sign-act provides a basis for seeing the cleansing of the temple as the second sign.

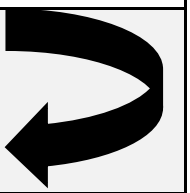
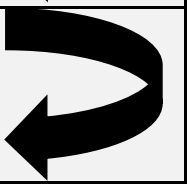
[46]R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and the Letters of John*, Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 148–49; Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5–12* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

[47]Stephen Kim, "The Christological and Eschatological Significance of Jesus' Miracle in John 5," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (Oct–Dec 2008): 414.

Gentile expressing faith in Jesus in the first cycle (4:53–54) to the city of Jerusalem and Jewish opposition toward his signs and Messianic claims in the second cycle (5:16–18). This lack of responding faith culminates in the summary at the end of the Festival cycle: "Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 'Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they could not believe" (12:37–39a). Following this crescendo of opposition, Jesus performs no more public signs in the Fourth Gospel. Having surveyed the literary structures of Ecclesiastes 7 and John 1–12, I turn now to consider the ways that the former anticipates the latter literarily.

Ecclesiastes Points to Jesus as the Consummate Sage

As noted above, Qohelet juxtaposes grief and laughter at the outset of his better-than sayings in Ecclesiastes 7: "[1] A (good) name is better than fine oil, and the day of death better than the day of one's birth. [2] It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of every human person, and the living should take it to heart. [3] Grief is better than laughter, for when the face is troubled the heart may become glad." These verses appear to anticipate Jesus's public ministry cycle in the first half of John's Gospel, anticipating this connection through a deeper bifid structure within the first two verses:

Deep Structural Parallelism (Eccl 7:1–2)			
Line	**Phrase**	**Verse**	
A	Name (reputation)	1a	
B	Day of death	1c	
C	House of mourning	2a	
D	End of every human person	2c	
A′	Fine oil	1b	
B′	Day of birth	1d	
C′	House of feasting	2b	
D′	Those alive take it to heart	2d	

Parts A (name) and C (house of mourning) correspond and form a contrast with parts A′ (fine oil) and C′ (house of feasting). A person's name or reputation is sealed at their funeral, pictured by "the house of mourning." On the other hand, expensive oil/ointment carried connotations in the ancient world of feasting and celebration (cf. Eccl 9:7–9). In a similar way, parts B (day of death) and D (end of every human)

correspond and form a contrast with parts B′ (day of birth) and D′ (those yet alive). The day of death is quite literally the end of every person—the day in which they depart from life under the sun, understood as a certain and coming reality in Ecclesiastes. So too the day of birth stands as a cipher for those who are still alive and can heed the warning embedded in the proverbs.

Still, interpretive questions about the verses remain. What, for example, is the relationship of birth/death with a name and fine oil? And why does Qohelet prioritize the day of death over the day of birth? Some interpreters conclude that Qohelet draws a contrast between the clauses in v. 1a and 1b.[48] Knobel links the second saying to the fool, because at death he finally passes into oblivion and is freed from the disdain he has for life.[49] Lavoie understands the first proverb, a popular one, to mean that a good reputation surpasses a life of revelry. The second proverb, newly-coined by Qohelet, means that life's end, after which no more fame can be gained, surpasses life's beginning, which carries no guarantee of joy.[50] The first proverb would thus provide a positive, popular saying, while the second offers a negative, reactionary saying. This pessimistic reading is in keeping with the tenor of Qohelet's statements elsewhere (4:2; 5:14 [13]; 6:3). It is not clear, however, that a contrast is intended.

Ogden reads the proverbs as complementary, affirming that a good name and the day of death are more important than fine oil and the day of birth because only after death is a way opened for injustice to be resolved.[51] Ogden is right to see a correlation between the proverbs, but he probably too narrowly joins them to the intractable issue of injustice. Qohelet should also not be seen as commending death due to a happier fate in the afterlife, as he is concerned with life under the sun and has no rosy illusions about the afterlife (Eccl 9:10). The more likely connection is that the day of death is more important because it seals the significance of a person's reputation, while the day of birth offers the prospect of joy but no guarantee of success.

Some interpreters balk at this conclusion, as Qohelet affirms elsewhere that no one enjoys the legacy of remembrance by future generations (1:11; 2:16; 9:5). But this conclusion misses the point he makes here. What future generations remember is beyond anyone's control. What each person can control to a greater degree, however, is his own

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[48]Richard P. Belcher, Jr., *Ecclesiastes*, Mentor Commentary (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2017), 251. Shields notes that v. 1b is "unparalleled in Hebrew Wisdom Literature—even in Job" (Martin A. Shields, *The End of Wisdom: A Reappraisal of the Historical and Canonical Function of Ecclesiastes* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006], 176).

[49]August Knobel, *Commentar über das Buch Kohelet* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1836), 235.

[50]Lavoie, "Étude de Qohélet 7,1–4," 101.

[51]Graham S. Ogden, *Qoheleth*, Readings (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 101.

character and reputation, which are established finally at death. What happens after death is not within a person's purview. Thus Ginsburg notes that "it is death alone which decides the victory."[52] He cites Sirach 11:28: "Call no one happy before his death; by how he ends, a person becomes known" (NRSV). As to his apparent vaunting of death over life, Qohelet does not disparage life as meaningless[53] nor does he harbor a suicide wish.[54] Elsewhere he admits that the living have it better than the dead: "Indeed, whoever is joined to all the living has confidence, for even a living dog is better off than a dead lion!" (9:4). His repeated commendations of joy underscore that life is worth living however painful. Rather, he recognizes that due to the variable nature of the fallen world, changes of fortune and of standing are common yet devastating. Only at death does a person escape life's destructive vicissitudes. Still, Qohelet's stated preference for the place of mourning does not negate his broader calls to joy in the book. He spurns mere pleasure as hedonism (Eccl 2:1) and conditions his calls to enjoyment through the lens of fearing God. Living with life's end and brevity in mind frees a person to derive more substantive enjoyment from each moment. This is a relative value that makes the person attending a funeral more impressionable than one attending a feast.

In this juxtaposed contrast, the careful reader is reminded of the life and ministry of Jesus in John. Jesus begins his public ministry and performs his first miracle in the Fourth Gospel by attending "the house of feasting," at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1–11). Here, drinking as part of the wedding ceremony is foregrounded through the transformation of water to wine and the collocation of drinking terms (οἶνος ["wine"] [5x], ὑδρία ["water jar"] [2x], ὕδωρ ["water"] [2x], ἀρχιτρίκλινος ["toastmaster," "master of the feast"] [3x], ἀντλέω ["to draw out (water)"] [2x], γεύομαι ["taste by sipping"]). Ecclesiastes (LXX) also foregrounds the drinking aspects of the feast by translating "the house of feasting" (בֵּית מִשְׁתֶּה) with οἶκον πότου ("the house of a drinking party") (Eccl 7:2). When the host family runs out of wine, Jesus is commissioned by his mother to resolve the shortfall. Jesus has the servants fill six water jars intended for the Jewish rites of purification. He turns the water into wine, prompting the master of the feast to extol the quality of the metamorphosed wine. The sign points to Jesus's identity (glory) and prompts faith in his disciples: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him" (John 2:11). This initial sign sets the stage for the even more spectacular signs to follow.

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[52]Christian D. Ginsburg, *The Song of Songs and Coheleth* (reprint of 1861 ed., New York: KTAV Publishing, 1970), 369.

[53]Robert Gordis, *Koheleth, the Man and His World: A Study of Ecclesiastes*, 3rd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 267.

[54]Aarre Lauha, *Kohelet*, Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 124.

Within the first half of the Fourth Gospel, Jesus comes to the final of his seven signs authenticating his Messianic claims. He concludes his public ministry by attending "the house of mourning," where he finds Lazarus already dead and proceeds to raise him from the dead (John 11:1–46). This is only the third person whom Jesus raises from the dead within the Gospels (cf. Jairus's daughter [Matt 9:18–19; Mark 5:22–24; Luke 8:41–42]; the widow's son at Nain [Luke 7:11–15]) and the only person in John's Gospel. Lazarus's raising from the dead is the greatest miracle in the Gospels, as he has been dead several days and is already buried. In this final sign there is an escalation both in the sign performed and in the sign's aftermath. In this case, Jesus waits until Lazarus has died so that by the time he arrives Lazarus has been in the tomb four days (John 11:17). The house of Lazarus and his sisters has become a "house of mourning" (בֵּית אֵבֶל) (Eccl 7:2, 4), as the villagers gather to grieve and console the family (John 11:31). Mary leaves the house in a hurry at the news of Jesus's arrival, prompting the mourners to assume she is going to weep at the tomb. Jesus himself, upon seeing the coterie of mourners, is "deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled" (John 11:33). As he gazes on the tomb, he weeps, the only time in the Gospels he displays this emotion outside his weeping over Jerusalem (John 11:35; cf. Luke 19:41).

Jesus recognizes that Lazarus's death will issue not just in his own glory but in the glory of the Father: "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4). This sign points, rather, to Jesus's power over death by anticipating his own resurrection: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (11:25–26). Martha expresses her faith in Jesus as the Messiah through a clear testimony of belief: "She said to him, 'Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world'" (11:27). Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension will in turn transform his own "house of mourning" (centered on the disciples) into a "house of feasting" with the joy of his victory over death.

Jesus has the stone covering the tomb removed and calls forth Lazarus from the grave. Lazarus emerges, still bound in the graveclothes, signifying that he will one day return to the grave. The response to the sign escalates from the faith of the disciples to faith amongst the broader Jewish population. As a result of the sign, "many of the Jews… believed in him" (11:45). Others report him to the Pharisees, setting the stage for the growing conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. In performing his sign cycle, Jesus has moved from a house of feasting to a house of mourning, which in Qohelet's construal is "better." Within the scope of John's Gospel, the house of mourning is also better in that Jesus receives greater glory and the miracle prompts even more belief on the part of the people, one of the key concerns of the Gospel (John 20:30–31). The Gospel writer concurs implicitly with Qohelet's affirmation that attendance at a funeral supersedes attendance at a feast.

Jesus, as the wise teacher, has extracted more "value" from the funeral than from the feast, anticipating the worldwide implications of his own resurrection, which will begin to reverse the devastating effects of the sin-curse.

In an interesting furtherance of this connection, Jesus proceeds to turn a would-be house of feasting into a house of mourning in the next episode, when he is anointed for death by Mary at a special dinner hosted by Lazarus (John 12:1–11). During their gathering for a meal (v. 2), Mary anoints Jesus's feet with a "fine ointment," reminiscent of the fine ointment compared to a good name in Ecclesiastes 7:1. Jesus stipulates that her act has prepared him for the day of his death (v. 7), echoing Ecclesiastes's vaunting of the day of death as better than the day of birth. Jesus's presence in the village causes a large crowd to gather, prompting increased hostility from the Jewish leaders, who desire to put to death both Lazarus and Jesus (John 12:10–11). This animosity will soon lead to Jesus's crucifixion. However, in sacrificing his life as an atonement for sin, Jesus will achieve an even greater outcome, the salvation of his people from all over the world (John 17:6, 20–21).

Conclusion

This essay has focused on intertextual links between Ecclesiastes and John by tracing out literary correlations establishing that the writer of the Fourth Gospel echoes and alludes to Ecclesiastes. He points to Jesus as the ultimate "convener" (*Qohelet*) or teacher who leads his disciples to find joy in a fallen world encroached upon by death. General links between the books include the mysterious movement of wind (Eccl 11:5; John 3:8), the coming judgment of good and evil (Eccl 12:14; John 5:28–29), and the closing epilogue highlighting the prominent teacher who instructs his disciples with authoritative and truthful words (Eccl 12:9–14; John 20:30–31; 21:24–25). A more specific link appears in the contrast between the house of feasting and the house of mourning in Ecclesiastes 7, a contrast that anticipates Jesus's ministry in the first half of John's Gospel. Jesus begins at a house of feasting in Cana and ends at a house of mourning in Bethany. I argue that Jesus's movement from a house of feasting to a house of mourning anticipates his own transformative death and resurrection whereby he metamorphoses the grieving of his disciples into the promised eschatological joy to come. The writer of John hints in these vignettes that Jesus is the embodiment of true wisdom as expressed in the Old Testament wisdom corpus. Jesus is the greater sage who encapsulates the wisdom of Qohelet and transforms the realities of a fallen world from mourning to joy by overcoming the funeral with the hope of the eschatological feast. Jesus confirms for his disciples in the upper room that the experience of momentary grief serves only to heighten the experience of lasting joy: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.… So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:20–22).