Contents

Preface	7
Introduction	
The authorship of Ecclesiastes	10
1. The historical setting	13
2. The Hebrew of Ecclesiastes	15
3. The term Qohelet	18
The Genre of Ecclesiastes	21
Different approaches to Ecclesiastes	29
1. The Heterodox Qohelet	30
2. The Orthodox Qohelet	32
3. The Struggling Qohelet	36
Hermeneutical keys for understanding Ecclesiastes	41
1. Qohelet's epistemology	41
2. The meaning of <i>hebel</i>	42
3. The phrase 'under the sun'	46
4. The question of 'gain' and the calls to enjoyment	48
5. The breakdown of the deed-consequence relationship	50
The identity of Qohelet and the danger of	
speculative wisdom	51
Preaching and teaching Ecclesiastes	55

Ι	The prologue:	
	an exploration of the nature of the world (I:I-II)	59
	The superscription (1:1)	59
	The motto (I:2)	60
	The key question of the book (1:3)	63
	An introductory poem: the wonder of creation	
	or the futility of effort? (I:4–II)	65
	The futility of the natural world (1:4–7)	66
	The futility of the human world (1:8–11)	69
	Homiletical implications	72
2	Qohelet's search for meaning under the sun (1:12-2:26) 74
	The failure of wisdom (1:12–18)	75
	The failure of pleasure (2:1-11)	82
	Homiletical implications	89
	The failure of wisdom in light of folly and death (2:12–17)	90
	Homiletical implications	96
	The failure of the results of labour (2:18-23)	98
	Homiletical implications	IOI
	Advice when life does not make sense (2:24–26)	102
	Homiletical implications	109
3	The search for understanding the role of human being	gs:
	does God make any difference? (3:1-22)	III
	The poem on time (3:1–8)	113
	Qohelet's reflections on the poem on time:	
	the frustrating work of God (3:9–15)	117
	Qohelet's reflections on injustice:	
	man has no advantage over beasts (3:16–22)	128
	Homiletical implications	135

4

4	The frustration of unfulfilled expectations (4:1-6:9)	139
	The frustration of loneliness met in companionship	
	(4:1–16)	141
	Political power oppresses with no one to comfort (4:1-	-3)141
	The Frustrations of Labour Alleviated through	
	Companionship (4:4–12)	143
	The fleeting nature of political power (4:13–16)	149
	Homiletical implications	155
	Caution in approaching God in worship?	
	(5:1–7 [Heb. 4:17–5:6])	157
	Corruption among government officials	
	(5:8–9 [Heb. 5:7–8])	167
	Homiletical implications	171
	Unfulfilled expectations related to wealth	
	(5:10–6:9 [Heb. 5:9–6:9])	173
	General dissatisfaction with wealth	
	(5:10–17 [Heb. 5:9–16])	173
	Homiletical implications	179
	Advice in light of the dissatisfaction of wealth:	
	enjoy the portion (5:18–20 [Heb. 5:17–19])	181
	The tragedy of not enjoying one's wealth (6:1–9)	184
	Homiletical implications	191
5	Human limitations concerning knowledge:	
	who knows what is good? (6:10–8:17)	195
	Human limitation: the essence of humanity (6:10–12)	196
	Proverbial sayings on 'what is good?' (7:1–14)	200
	Homiletical implications	213
	A cautious approach to life and God (7:15–18)	215
	Homiletical implications	221
	Searching for the sum of things (7:19–29)	222

	Homiletical implications	233
	The arbitrary nature of the world (8:1–17)	235
	The arbitrary nature of human government (8:1–9)	237
	The arbitrary nature of divine government (8:10–17)	248
	Homiletical implications	258
6	Human limitations concerning knowledge:	
	the uncertainty of the future (9:1–10:20)	260
	Living under the cloud of death (9:1–12)	261
	Homiletical implications	274
	Insignificant things have grave consequences (9:13–10:20)	276
	Homiletical implications	296
7	Living with the uncertainty of the future (11:1-12:8)	298
	Take action even if the future is uncertain (11:1–6)	299
	Homiletical Implications	305
	Enjoy life before the dark days come (11:7–12:8)	306
	Homiletical implications	335
8	The epilogue: an evaluation of Qohelet's message	
	(12:9–14)	337
	The simple truth: fear God and keep his commandments	
	(12:9–14)	338
	Homiletical implications	352
Ľ	ist of abbreviations	354
N	lotes	356