

2022 Exegesis Exam on Proverbs: Recommended Commentaries

Before the exam date, be sure to do at least four things:

1. Secure commentaries ahead of time. Take a look at them. If you find one unhelpful, obtain a good substitute. If you have questions about one, email Dr. Matt *before the exam begins*.
 - a. People grading exams don't look favorably on old commentaries, especially when a student only uses commentaries more than 20 years old. At least three of the ones you cite should be published since 2000.
2. Familiarize yourself with the book of Proverbs. Once you have a feel for the Proverbs that begin in chapter 10, you can engage in skimming, though it is good to slow down and read the last couple of chapters more carefully. Takes notes on themes and ideas.
3. Read introductions to Proverbs in study Bibles, such as:
 - a. *The New Oxford Annotated Study Bible* (edited by Coogan et al.)
 - b. *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (edited by Harold W. Attridge et al.)
 - c. *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (edited by Walter Harrelson et al.)
 - d. *The CEB Study Bible* (edited by Joel B. Green et al.)
 - e. NOTE: Whenever you use an idea from a study Bible, it needs to be cited. Having said that, it's best to avoid citing study Bibles too much on the exam. So, use them to get your bearings on the book, but don't rely on them too much in the exam itself.
4. Read introductions in your commentaries.

Nearly every PCUSA exegesis exam has questions dealing with:

- a. establishing the text,
- b. literary context,
- c. historical context,
- d. canonical context, and
- e. theology and application.

The following chart explains which commentaries are helpful in dealing with which questions. Most commentaries deal with [b] literary and [d] canonical context, but students need to be careful in selecting resources to help with [a] establishing the text, describing [c] historical matters, and [e] applying the text to today.

If you use a library copy online, **BE SURE YOU CLOSE THE COMMENTARY WHEN YOU ARE DONE**. That will allow another student to go in and use it after you. Also, it will work best if you save relevant pages of the commentary, close it, and then read what you've saved to your computer. This practice will allow your fellow students to use these resources as well.

You may be asked technical questions involving the textual apparatus. So, be sure you have a copy of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*—the Hebrew Bible with the textual apparatus. Be sure you have the

English key to the Latin words, abbreviations, and symbols (see pages LIX to LXIX). Don't forget that the last page of that key lists symbols, including ones that you might otherwise miss. If you've forgotten textual criticism, review that material from Hebrew class.

Because Proverbs contains so many proverbs, some commentaries only discuss some of them, especially in chapter 10 and beyond. See the second-to-last column below. "Selective" means you shouldn't expect to find every proverb discussed. "Comprehensive" means most if not every proverb receives discussion.

Commentary Features

Author	Series	Date: may differ with eBooks	Establishing the Text			Literary Context	Historical Context	Canonical Context	Theology or App.?	Scope	Link to More Info, eBook if available
			New Trans.	Textual Criticism	He- brew						
Bellis	Wisdom	2018			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Compre- hensive	Click here for eBook
Clifford	OTL	2001	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Some	Compre- hensive	Click here for eBook
Davis	West- minster Bible	2000				Y	Some	Y	Y	Selective	Click here for eBook
Fox	Anchor	2000 2009	Y	Y; see 360-424, 982-1068	Y	Y	Y	Y		Compre- hensive	Chs 1-9 in Print; Chs 10-31 in eBook
Goldin- gay	For Every- one	2014							Y	Selective	Click here for eBook
Hayes	New Col- lege- ville	2013				Y		Y		Selective	Click here for eBook
Horne	Smyth & Helwys	2003			Y	Y	Y	Y	Some	Compre- hensive	Click here for eBook
Long- man	Baker	2006	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Some	Compre- hensive	Click here for eBook
Lucas	Two Hori- zons	2015				Y	Some	Y	Y	Compre- hensive	Click here for eBook
Murphy	Word (WBC)	1998	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Compre- hensive	Click here for eBook
Pauw	Belief	2015				Y	Some	Y	Y	Selective	Click here for eBook

Author	Series	Date: may differ with eBooks	Establishing the Text			Literary Context	Historical Context	Canonical Context	Theology or App.?	Scope	Link to More Info, eBook if available
			New Trans.	Textual Criticism	Hebrew						
Perdue	Interpretation	2000				Y	Y	Y	Some	Selective	Click here for eBook
Van Leeuwen	NIBC	1997			Some	Y	Some	Y	Y (See "Reflections")	Comprehensive	Click here for eBook
Treier	Brazos	2011				Y		Y	Some	Selective	Click here for eBook
Waltke	NICOT	2004-5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Comprehensive	Chs 1-15 eBook; Chs 16-31 eBook
Yoder	AOTC	2009			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Comprehensive	Click here for eBook

Annotated Bibliography (in Alphabetical Order)

Two important things to note:

- If a source interacts with Hebrew using transliteration, you may want to use the following resource to discern the exact Hebrew letters being described: <http://opensiddur.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/SBL-Handbook-of-Style-Transliterating-and-Transcribing-Ancient-Texts.pdf>
 - It provides two systems of Hebrew transliteration. The first is the academic one, which has the diacritics above and below letters (especially vowels, e.g., *â*). The second is the general one. It doesn't have diacritics, but a single letter can refer to more than one Hebrew character (e.g., *a* = *patakh* or *qamets*).
- If you use an electronic copy of a book, be sure to cite that you are doing so. For example, you can insert "eBook ed." just before the place of publication.

Bellis, Alice Ogden. *Proverbs*. Wisdom Commentary. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2018.

This is an excellent commentary that's new, accessible, and clear. The author is especially skilled at handling Hebrew and gender issues. On the Hebrew, see especially the textboxes called "Translation Matters."

Clifford, Richard J. *Proverbs: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Although this commentary is somewhat dated, it's part of a highly respected series. The author is a specialist on wisdom literature. For textual critical matters and some Hebrew discussion, see the footnotes on the translation.

Davis, Ellen F. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

Davis is one of the best interpreters of the Bible. Keep in mind, however, that she is fairly selective in which proverbs she discusses. Also, the commentary is on the older side.

Fox, Michael V. *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

_____. *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Yale Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

This author is well known for his work on wisdom literature and careful, technical attention to Hebrew. While some notes on textual criticism can be found in the commentary itself, the most complete discussion of textual criticism can be found on pages 360-424, 982-1068. The second volume has a separate introduction for Proverbs 10–31. It also has essays on subjects like “ethics” and “revelation” after the commentary.

Goldingay, John. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs for Everyone*. Old Testament for Everyone. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

This short volume looks briefly at select passages from Proverbs with a focus on relating them to today.

Hayes, Katherine Murphey. *Proverbs*. New Collegeville Bible Commentary. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013.

This commentary is written by a professor at a Catholic seminary. It may not be as helpful as some others on this list, but an electronic version is available through our library.

Horne, Milton P. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003.

This commentary series is usually excellent for matters such as application. This particular volume, however, tends to be more technical.

Longman III, Tremper. *Proverbs*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

This commentary is written by a leading conservative scholar. Depending on the nature of the exam, it may be useful to consult the appendix, which contains short topical studies such as “Alcohol,” “Anger,” and “Appropriate Use of Words.”

Lucas, Ernest. *Proverbs*. The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015.

This commentary briefly covers core topics. It’s a great place to start one’s study.

Murphy, Roland E. *Proverbs*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998.

Although dated, this work has some of the best resources when it comes to establishing the text (translation, textual criticism, Hebrew). It is a technical commentary, which makes it a little difficult to navigate (especially in eBook format). Each section usually has these sections: [1] a bibliography (which you can usually disregard), [2] a translation with footnotes (pay special attention to these footnotes because they often deal with textual criticism), [3] form/structure/setting, [4] comment (which often deals with Hebrew words), and [5] explanation (which looks at the bigger picture and may touch on application).

Pauw, Amy Plantinga. *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*. Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

This thoughtful commentary is written by a professor of theology. So, it includes useful theological insight, but it is less useful in dealing with technical Hebrew matters.

Perdue, Leo G. *Proverbs*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2000.

Although this commentary doesn't discuss every proverb, it does discuss most of them. Moreover, it does more than most to talk about historical contexts and social settings.

Treier, Daniel J. *Proverbs & Ecclesiastes*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011.

This commentary is not as helpful as many of the others on the list. The introduction, for example, is a joint one that also focuses on Ecclesiastes. The commentary on Prov 10-29 focuses on virtues and vices, rather than going verse-by-verse or even talking about key proverbs from each chapter. Nevertheless, because the eBook is available from our library, students may want to consult it.

Van Leeuwen, Raymond C. "The Book of Proverbs." Pages 5:17–264 in *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.

Although the commentary is now somewhat dated, it provides useful insights, especially in the subsections called "Reflections" at the end of each section. Do not rely on the transliteration in this eBook because it did not transfer well into the electronic format.

Waltke, Bruce K. *The Book of Proverbs*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004.

This commentary is one of the most in-depth and lengthy. It is written by a conservative scholar known for his extensive knowledge of Hebrew grammar. At the time I write this, we don't have an eBook for this commentary on our library website, but we may end up obtaining it, so check back.

Yoder, Christine Roy. *Proverbs*. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon, 2009.

This commentary has a lot going for it: the author is a leading thinker about wisdom literature. Additionally, this volume is accessible, it interacts with the Hebrew, and it contains sections on "Theological and Ethical Overview." The hardest part of using this commentary is that the eBook can be difficult to use. From the library webpage, I often need to click "View eBook" more than

once to get it to appear. Then, I need to click on the lines at the top of the webpage to see the table of contents:

