

### Preface to the Books of Solomon 1545 (1534)

Three books bear the name of Solomon. The first is *Proverbia*, “Proverbs” [*die Sprüche*]. It may properly be called a book of good works, for in it he teaches how to lead a good life before God and the world....

The second book is called *Qoheleth*, the one we call “The Preacher.” It is a book of comfort. When a man would live an obedient life according to the teaching of the first book [Proverbs] and attend to his duty or office, then the devil, the world, and his own flesh put up so much resistance that he becomes weary and discouraged with his station in life and regrets everything he has begun, for things simply will not go as he wants them to. Everything becomes a struggle then; dissatisfaction, impatience, and murmuring arise until a man is ready to give up all hope and do nothing more. For if the devil cannot prevent obedience through covetousness and desire on the right hand, he will hinder it on the left hand through toil and trouble.

While in the first book [Proverbs] Solomon teaches obedience in the face of mad lust and desire, so in this book he teaches that men are to be patient and steadfast in obedience, in the face of unpleasantness and temptation [*anfechtung*], and ever to wait out the brief hour in peace and joy. What they cannot keep or alter, they are to let go; it will all work out, etc.

The third book [Song of Solomon] is a song of praise, in which Solomon praises God for obedience, as for a gift of God. For where God is not himself the householder and ruler, there is neither obedience nor peace in any station of life. But where there is obedience and good governing, there God dwells, he kisses and embraces his dear bride with his word, which is the kiss of his lips. Therefore when things go in a land or a home as nearly as possible according to the first two of these books, then one may well sing this third book and thank God. For God has not only taught us this, but has himself also done it. Amen. (Luther’s Works, vol. 35, p.258-261)