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THE THEOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS



A Thesis presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Old Testament
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology



by

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May 1964

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Placed third among the Writings, the third section of the Old Testament according to the Hebrew order of the books, is found one of the most fascinating books in the Hebrew canon. The Book of Proverbs, or משלי (Proverbs of . . .) as it is titled in the Hebrew Scriptures, comprises a compilation of multifarious maxims and short treatises ranging over content as broad as life itself in the first millennium B.C. Yet because of the genre of its wisdom, this Book has a living quality that is not outmoded after two and one half millennia. Quoted and alluded to in the New Testament, Proverbs remains part of the $\text{\u03c0\u03ac\u03c3\u03b1 \u03b3\u03c1\u03b1\u03c6\u03b7}$ which is profitable for doctrinal instruction and ethical guidance and discipline in the Christian life.

The intention of this research in Proverbs is to discover both the implicit theology--that embodied in the perspective and underlying assumptions of the proverbs--as well as that explicit theology contained in the unequivocal statements relating to God, man, and proper relations between man and God, and consequently, between the God-fearing man and his fellowman. To even the casual reader it at once becomes apparent that this collection of "wisdom" is in no sense a

recapitulation of the revealed theology of the past; rather, it is not a formal theology at all, but a translation of theology in proper attitudes and actions to be characteristic of the ethically mature Israelite. Hence it became an effective means for inculcating this way of life to the young.

Specifically, then, the purpose of this study is to discover and clarify the contribution of the $\square^{\prime} \psi \gamma$ to Old Testament theology. How does the theology herein reflected relate in general to the Law and Prophets? What are the distinctive emphases of the Book? What significance is to be derived from the palpable omissions? Does the theology inherent in the Book merely reflect that of the remainder of the Old Testament or does it contribute something new into the stream of truth?

Method

This research is principally concerned with the exegesis rather than the isagogics of Proverbs. Therefore the theological framework of what was said has importance for this investigation over inquiries into authorship, compilation, and precise dating of the individual collections.

The method then is that of Biblical Theology, analyzing thoroughly each of the nine hundred and fifteen proverbs, then synthesizing the results of exegesis into definitive categories for evaluation and comparison.

Constant recourse to the original text has been made in the seventh edition of the Biblia Hebraica. Lexicographical data is based on the 1955 corrected reprint of the first edition of Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs: A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, unless otherwise stated. Where the Septuagint text is compared the sixth edition of Alfred Rahlfs has been used. The English text employed is that of the Revised Standard Version. Though somewhat detrimental to the fluency of the treatment in terms of readability, copious (in most cases, exhaustive) references have been inserted in the body of the text by the use of parentheses. Each such reference has been carefully weighed before inclusion in the given category, and serves to render ready reference to the topic at hand.

Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that the Masoretic text of Proverbs as contained in the seventh edition of the Biblia Hebraica is a relatively accurate transmission of the original, and that while there are textual corruptions, these are minor and do not interfere significantly with the outcome of this investigation.

While here and there ancient ethnic proverbs showing similarity or possible borrowing in either direction are treated in brief, it is acknowledged that such treatment here is of necessity more incidental than pertinent to stated purpose. This study is concerned with analysis

of the Hebrew proverbs eo nomine, and the questions of non-Hebraic relationships or parallels, and source analysis, a highly complex and often a rather subjective venture, must be left to another study.

Moreover, it is inferred from careful comparisons of the Proverbial collections that it is proper to speak of a "theology" rather than "theologies" of the Proverbs. That is to say that though there are several authors and as many or more collections, that these collections are not antithetical in their theological point of view, but reflect a homogeneity that is easily discernible. "If one regards Proverbs as a whole, for example, it is apparent," concludes Muilenburg, "that the collections have been assembled from a dominating point of view, that it is Yahweh who gives wisdom. . . ."¹ What is strikingly apparent is the variety of form the לִשְׁׁנָיִם has taken in each collection, e. g., the elongated proverb, the crisp, regular parallelism, the composite of thirty, number proverbs, and the acrostic arrangement. The mold varies, but the material is unaltered. This is not to say that there are no superficial contradictions.² There are paradoxes, of course, just as in Paul's "proverbs," if they may be called that, in Galatians 6:2, 5, which should not be unilaterally applied. In such cases wisdom lies in

¹ James Muilenburg, The Way of Israel, Vol. V of Religious Perspectives (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 99.

² Prov. 22:4 and 28:6; 20:1 and 31:6, 7; 26:4 and 26:5.

the retention of both propositions and the acceptance of paradox whenever one is dealing with a multisided principle. Though lacking in a plot, unity of authorship, historical progression and other such factors that make for over-all unity, and though Proverbs is perhaps the most internally disjunctive of the books of the Old Testament, there is, nevertheless, above and beyond the unifying employment of the לִשְׁׁוֹן in its varied forms, a unity of theme and theology that is pervading and unbroken.³

Indispensable Introductory Matters

Since any treatment of the theology of a Biblical book presupposes a working knowledge of the pertinent introductory material, the barest outline of same is given here and may be considered as an extension of the assumptions of the preceding section.

Analysts divide the Book on internal evidence into from five to nine divisions. Fritsch's delineation into seven seems to be acceptable as logical section divisions.⁴ These are listed with appropriate quotations from each section:

³This is to be seen throughout the body of this work, but especially in the section on "the fear of Yahweh," pp. 26-31.

⁴Charles T. Fritsch, "Proverbs: Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible, eds., George A. Buttrick and Samuel Terrien (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), IV, 774.

- I. 1:1-9:18 "The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel"
- II. 10:1-22:16 "The proverbs of Solomon"
- III. 22:17-24:34 "The words of the wise . . . thirty sayings"
- IV. 25:1-29:27 "These are the proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied"
- V. 30:1-33 "The words of Agur son of Jakeh of Massa"
- VI. 31:1-9 "The words of Lemuel, king of Massa, which his mother taught him"
- VII. 31:10-31 (An alphabetical acrostic on The Good Wife)

The least certain as independent collections are sections III and VII. Both of these sections contain material molded into a special form. Whether this means ipso facto that it had to be a separate collection and of other authorship remains in question. There is no doubt, however, in view of the superscriptions incorporated into the text that there were at least five collections. Paterson follows the above scheme, except that he slices off the last twelve verses of section III to make another section--eight in all.⁵ Just as the "thirty sayings" have an introduction (22:17-21), so they also have an appendix (this section in question--24:23-34), if indeed it is a separate collection.

⁵ John Paterson, The Wisdom of Israel, Vol. XI of Bible Guides, edited by William Barclay and F. F. Bruce (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), 59. The same scheme is followed by Theodore H. Robinson, The Poetry of the Old Testament, (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1947), p. 167. Nine divisions are set up by Edgar Jones, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: Introduction and Commentary, (London: SCM Press, 1961), pp. 21, 22.

It is difficult to disentangle matters of authorship, date, and the character of the לְשׁוֹן־חָכָם because of their interrelatedness. First, it is to be noted that the לְשׁוֹן־חָכָם is used in this Book in several obviously different ways. It includes what is ordinarily denoted in English by the word "proverb"--a popular truism stated in catchy lingo and characteristically short.⁶ Some such examples are: "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the back of fools" (26:3); "He who digs a pit will fall into it" (26:27); "He who is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys" (18:9). This kind of "proverb" is virtually authorless; it lives in the speech of the masses, because it contains common sense that is intuitively cognoscible.

Much more prevalent among the מִן־הַחָכְמִים of Proverbs is the didactic parallelism employed in the professional circles of "the wise."⁷ This form of the לְשׁוֹן־חָכָם is almost wholly characteristic of sections II (10:1-22:16) and IV (25:1-29:27). Most of these sayings are couplets based upon observation, experience and divine insight in which: (1) opposites are contrasted (e. g., "Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but he who heeds reproof is honored."--13:18) or (2) a comparison is made (e. g., "Like a madman who throws fire-

⁶Richard C. Trench, Proverbs and Their Lessons, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1905), p. 7, et passim.

⁷A. R. Johnson, " לְשׁוֹן־חָכָם " Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East, presented to H. H. Rowley, Vol. III, in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), 164.

brands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, 'I am only joking!' (26:18,19). This usage reflects vividly the etymological idea of "comparison" or "likeness" in לִשְׁוֹת .⁸ In distinction from the antithetical and synonymous couplets exemplified respectively supra, there is also to be found the frequent use of the synthetic couplet in which the second member carries forward or completes the idea of the first member as in 18:21--"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits." At least one instance of the chiasmic parallelism (ABBA) occurs:

My son, if your heart is wise,
 My heart too will be glad.
 My soul will rejoice
 When your lips speak what is right. (23:15,16)

A third major literary form of the לִשְׁוֹת is to be seen in Proverbs in which the didactic thrust by the wise man is extended beyond the parallelism into a short treatise. The longest of these includes the whole of chapter eight devoted to a monologue by Wisdom personified; the alphabetic poem of the thirty-first chapter exemplifies this type also; but the regular extended לִשְׁוֹת of exhortation and admonition, including the parable (7:6-27) is most characteristic of section I (1:1-9:18). A. R. Johnson who is careful to accord due consideration

⁸Compare non-proverbial usage of לִשְׁוֹת in the biblical text meaning to represent or to be like someone or something: Is. 14:10; 46:5; Job 30:19; Psa. 49:12 and 20 (Eng.); 28:1; 143:7.

to actual usage over and above etymology has an observation which is pertinent here:

Thus the term לְשׁוֹן־חָכְמָה besides denoting the simple proverb, was used to describe something of the literary genre, although more technical and much more elaborate, which could likewise be employed as a recognized medium of instruction by those who claimed to know something of the mystery of living and the secret of the happy life.⁹

It is true that לְשׁוֹן־חָכְמָה has other connotations in other parts of the Old Testament, as for example, Balaam's prophetic poems (Num. 23:7-10; 18-24; 24:3-9; 15-24), a taunt chant (Mic. 2:4; Psa. 44:14; Is. 14:4-21), a bitter complaint (Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2), a personal paradox (I Sam. 10:12; 19:24), Ezekiel's riddles or parables (Ezek. 17:2; 20:49 [Hebrew 21:5]), and Job's poems of self-justification and grief in 27:1f. and 29:1f., all of which serve to underscore the importance of deriving the meaning of the term for the book of Proverbs from its actual use there.

One's conception of the nature of the לְשׁוֹן־חָכְמָה has decided implications for his views about authorship and dating. It is a mistake to assume that the genesis of Hebrew proverbs follows the same pattern as that found in the English language, where the proverb is always short and virtually authorless. Paterson is typical of that trend that does this all too easily. In his zeal to derogate from the textual ascriptions of Solomonic authorship (1:1; 10:1; 25:1), he throws out virtually all

⁹Johnson, op. cit., p. 165.

individual authorship (cf. 30:1; 31:1) and ascribes the formation of the proverbs to the masses in these words:

There may be proverbs from Solomon in our book but we cannot identify them. For truth to tell, proverbs have no father. No man can say, Go to, I will make a proverb. For proverbs are born not made. The wind bloweth where it listeth and proverbs came unbidden and unexpected. For the true proverb is "the wit of one and the wisdom of many" . . . Brief, pithy, pungent, popular--these are the marks of an authentic proverb.¹⁰

Co-ordinate with this view is that of Edgar Jones:

Not only the form but also the content of the book are against the traditional authorship, and whilst it is possible that some parts of the two collections directly linked with his name [actually there are three, cf. *supra*] may be due to Solomon, the majority of the sayings belong to a much later time.¹¹ (All italics have been supplied.)

The Solomonic ascriptions of authorship, however, are reliable portions of the text whose linguistic foundations in the Masoretic text are commensurate with that of the book as a whole. Moreover, I Kings must be reckoned with in its forthright declarations that Solomon was the recipient of a divine χάρισμα of wisdom (e.g., "The Lord gave Solomon wisdom . . ."--5:12; "Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and

¹⁰Paterson, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹¹Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 22. Note: When Jones spells out his dates for the collections they range over a half a millennium from the eighth to the third century B.C., with about one third of the book coming in the third century (chs. 1-9 and 31:10-31), p. 23.

none like you shall arise after you"--3:12, and see also the larger context, 3:5-28; "all Israel . . . stood in awe of the king because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to render justice"--3:28; "the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, . . ."--10:1). Now some kind of a permanent record must have been kept of Solomon's wisdom lore, for he is said to have produced 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (I Kings 4:32--Hebrews 5:12). To suppose that less than one third of these proverbs (circa 800) found their way into the collections bearing his name, including the ones that were "copied" (25:1f.) is readily more credible than the hypothesis that if perchance any of Solomonic authorship persist in the collections "we cannot identify them,"¹² captions and authentic historical background notwithstanding. As Young concludes: "there is no reason for doubting the trustworthiness of these titles and not assuming that the bulk of the book is indeed from Solomon."¹³

In reference to dating the contents of the Book, it is interesting to note that Albright has recently characterized the higher critical notion of "the fifth-third centuries B.C." Age of the Wise Men as a "curious myth" that is "most drastically stated in the popularizations

¹²Paterson, op. cit., p. 63.

¹³Edward J. Young, An Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), p. 301.

of modern critical scholarship of the Wellhausen school."¹⁴ Though Albright only goes so far as regarding "a Solomonic nucleus as probable"¹⁵ he confidently opposes the opinion of R. H. Pfeiffer and those who have followed in his wake, who ascribe post-exilic origins to the greater part of the Proverbs. Thus:

We may freely admit that the Book of Proverbs was not edited in approximately its present form until about the fifth century B. C. without assuming that any material of post-exilic date is included in the Book.¹⁶

Albright bases a pre-exilic origin for Proverbs, not as does Young on the authenticity of the titles, but upon the parallels to be found between Proverbs and wisdom literature contemporary of the earlier period. Two factors bolster his conclusion: (1) He dates the supposed Egyptian counterpart to 22:17-24:22, the Maxims of Amenemope "in or about the twelfth century B. C.,"¹⁷ and further states that "it is very risky to date the composition of the Maxims of Amenemope after the end of the second millennium."¹⁸ (2) He infers that where there are parallels or borrowing from the Canaanite-Phoenician writings that "many of the Canaanite items have their closest extra-biblical analogies in the

¹⁴W. F. Albright, "Some Canaanite-Phoenician Sources of Hebrew Wisdom," Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East, Vol. III in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), 13.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 6.

Bronze Age.¹⁹ [Late Bronze: 1550-1200].²⁰

Unger is incisive in his findings regarding the older critical dating of the Book:

The obvious monotheism of the book requires a post-exilic date only under the unsound critical theory of the evolutionary development of Israel's religion. The absence of any challenge to idolatry does not require a post-exilic date as the early reign of Solomon was evidently free from idolatrous contamination.²¹

Whereas a number of scholars assumed Babylonian sources for many biblical proverbs, it was concluded that these came to the attention of the Jewish community during the Exile. The personification of Wisdom in chapter eight was thought to reflect the philosophy of the Hellenistic period (330-100 B.C.). "Despite all this, however," states Plaut, "scholarly opinion has shifted again during the last decades. New Ugaritic and Phoenician sources have been uncovered which make it likely that many of our proverbs go back to a very old folk tradition current in the Mediterranean basin, . . ."²² On the basis of this

¹⁹Ibid., p. 13.

²⁰James B. Pritchard, Gibeon Where the Sun Stood Still (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. xi. The entire Bronze Age runs from 3100-1200 B.C.

²¹Merrill F. Unger, Introductory Guide to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1951), p. 374.

²²W. Gunther Plaut, Book of Proverbs, A Commentary, in The Jewish Commentary for Bible Readers (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961), pp. 9,10.

conclusion he further adds what well may be assumed to be an acceptable hypothesis about the date.

This would place the origin of our proverbs back into very ancient days, and the likelihood that Solomon collected and edited them and perhaps contributed a good many of his own sayings becomes once more a preferred scholarly assumption until more decisive evidence arises. . . .

To sum up: the bulk of our Book is old, of Solomon's time or even older. About 700 B.C.E. its present form became well established, but during the next centuries changes and additions were still made, and especially chapters 30, 31:1-9, and 31:10-31 were three late accretions to the Book.²³

Only the briefest introduction has been delineated here. To furnish such is needful to any such study that is to be grounded in historical, grammatical interpretation; but at the same time it is admittedly hazardous in view of the constant peril of over-simplification. Moreover, many generalities remain in matters of the introduction of this book where one could well desire more specifics as to dates, authors, and ultimate sources. But this does not paralyze the plan of this research, nor, on the other hand, would unlimited knowledge of these matters nullify the purpose of this thesis. To attempt a further preview of the content of Proverbs would merely duplicate the material found in the Table of Contents or to encroach upon the detailed considerations of the body of this paper to which attention is now directed.

²³Plaut, op. cit., p. 10.

CHAPTER II

THE ANTITHETICAL WELTANSCHAUNGEN: WISDOM AND FOLLY

The Mutually Exclusive "Ways"

The Hebrews had no philosophy as such, because the meaning of human existence was comprehended entirely within the confines of their theology. The word of God as given through Moses and the other charismatic leaders afforded preceptive truth, theological, ceremonial, and practical, that covered the whole range of human experience from birth until death. Again and again from the beginning of their nation Yahweh had intervened for them and had taught them that their hope lay in His TOPI (loving, merciful, covenant faithfulness), which was revealed in His mighty acts. Thus it was that the Hebrews had the very grounds for their national and spiritual existence in their theocentric history. Regarding the relation of God's word and acts, G. Ernest Wright sees the following close coordination:

By means of human agents God provides each event with an accompanying Word of interpretation, so that the latter is an integral part of the former, and both together serve as the guide to the understanding of future events. God is thus known by what he had done. The so-called "attributes" of God are inferences drawn from the way he has acted.¹

¹G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 84.

When God is known to be God as in Israel, then the revealed will of God takes precedence over all the thoughts of man. Wright continues to say:

The very nature of God's being places a tension at the heart of existence which destroys the natural man's integration of himself and his society in the rhythm of the kingdom of nature. The problem of life is not that of integration in the world. It is much deeper; it is the problem of obedience to the transcendent Lord. He has bound his elect to himself, on the one hand, by great acts of love and grace, and, on the other hand, by a covenant in which his will is expressed.²

Hence, it may be said that the Hebrew man "sees" in his history and "hears" in the Law and the Prophets and "experiences" covenant relationship with Yahweh, but the question arises: Does he "understand"?

No single book of the Old Testament concerns itself with the overall attitude and insight of man as thoroughly as does Proverbs.³ The stated purpose of the book is unmistakably clear:

That men may know wisdom and instruction,
 understand words of insight,
 receive instruction in wise dealing, righteousness,
 justice and equity;
 that prudence may be given to the simple,
 knowledge and discretion to the youth--
 the wise man may also hear and increase in learning,
 and the man of understanding acquire skill,

²Ibid., p. 21.

³Of the other wisdom literature of the Old Testament, Job is primarily a masterpiece of theodicy, and Ecclesiastes treats thematically on the one idea of the emptiness of worldliness. The Psalms are heavier on the side of religious feeling than reasonable religious attitude.

to understand a proverb and a figure,
the words of the wise and their riddles. (1:2-6).

Whereas the Hebrews did not have a philosophy of life as a thing apart from their theology, it became the function of the proverbs as contained in the "words of the wise" to challenge inner consent to that theology that knows God to be the center of all reality. Thus the proverbs supplemented the other modes of revelation by portraying the consequences that ensue divergent courses of conduct, and challenging obedience to God's will (i. e., righteousness) as the exclusive way of life.

Understanding for the Hebrew mind did not consist so much of participation in pure theoretical or speculative thought as it did in visualization and demonstration of the "way" of a given idea or principle. As Muilenburg observes: "Hebrew thinking is dynamic, alive, full of movement. Knowledge is not understood abstractly or theoretically, but concretely and experimentally."⁴ This accounts in part for the numerous proverbs given as imperatives; these were not extensions of the Law, but concrete forms to objectify wisdom as "the way" to live. By no means the only means of indicating "the way" (דֶּרֶךְ) of Israel, the proverbs are renowned for their graphic comparisons and illuminating contrasts which make that "way" dramatically clear. In

⁴ James Muilenburg, The Way of Israel, Vol. V of Religious Perspectives (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 16.

fact all the proverbs, whether individually cast in the mold of a comparison or contrast or not, have to do either with the right "way" or the wrong "way," reflecting respectively, antithetical Weltanschauungen.

The word דֶּרֶךְ in its literal denotation means first a "road" or "path." By extension it came to mean journey, direction or manner. The full figurative use of the word is its most extensive use in the Bible. As such it conveys usually a moral idea of how one is to act or be. As one encounters the דֶּרֶךְ in Proverbs it is roughly equivalent to the German Weltanschauung, because it connotes what is tantamount to a philosophical stance as regards one's world-and-life view.⁵ This is not to say that the Hebrews had a highly intellectualized notion of "the way," but the word did function under the simplicity of the simile to indicate for them a noetic alternative in choosing the course that one's actions would take in the day-to-day world.⁶

One of the most salient features of Proverbs is the sharp antithesis between the דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה "way of the LORD" (10:29) and the

⁵Of the seventy-two occurrences of דֶּרֶךְ in Proverbs all but seven (i. e., 7:8; 8:2; 15:19; 26:13; 30:19--three times) are used in this figurative sense. The Septuagintal equivalent of דֶּרֶךְ , $\delta\delta\delta\zeta$, also conveys this figurative idea; cf. Gerhard Kittel, Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neum Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1954), V, 47-65.

⁶Several other words (e. g., נֶרְחַח --twelve times; מַעַלְלֵי --four times; מַעַלְלֵי קָהָל --two times; נִתְיָבוּהָ --six times, once together with דֶּרֶךְ) are used as synonyms of דֶּרֶךְ in Proverbs in the same figurative manner.

דְּרַגְתֵּי רָעִים "way of evil men" (4:14). Each of these "ways" is denominated by a variety of synonyms. The former is once simply called "the way" (23:19); it is also: "the path(s) of life" (2:19; 5:6; 6:23; 10:17; 15:24), the "way of righteousness" (2:13; 4:11, 18; 8:20; 12:28; 13:6; 15:9; 16:17), the "way of good men" (2:20), and the "way of wisdom" (חַכְמָה), "insight" (רְבִיבָה), and "understanding" (שִׂכָּל), respectively in 4:11, cf. 8:32; 9:6 and 21:16. The latter way is the "way of evil" (2:12; 8:13; 28:10), of "darkness" (2:13), of "the wicked" (4:19; 15:9), of a "fool" (12:15), of "death" (14:12), of the "guilty" (21:8); it is definitely "a way that is not good" (16:29). Passing from a merely terminological analysis to that of the ideology of the entire book, it can be seen that the two "ways," which go in opposite directions, are to be discerned as wisdom and folly, or in synonymous terms: understanding and foolishness.

The wisdom of a prudent man is to discern his way,
 but the folly of fools is deceiving. (14:8)

The contrast between wisdom and folly as competing "ways" is obvious throughout the book. Pfeiffer has this interesting comment to make relative to the right way in Proverbs.

Although the figure of the right way is occasionally used in Egypt and Babylonia, in no ancient book of wisdom is this theme developed as fully as in Proverbs.⁷

⁷Robert H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), p. 658.

Furthermore, in Proverbs there is no middle ground between the two ways. The authors do not hesitate to state the way in bold "either . . . or"'s, good or bad's, positive or negative's. The matter is characteristically stated in the starkest terms as for instance, in 12:21:

No ill befalls the righteous [because of his righteousness] but the wicked are filled with trouble [growing out of his wickedness] (12:21).

He who presses the proverb literally, when it is elliptical in thought, will come out with multiple misunderstandings. Every conceivable literary device is used to make the black appear jet black and the white, snow white; the wise man never concerns himself with grays. Besides tautology⁸ and hyperbole,⁹ the use of the conditional sentence with its protasis and apodosis highlights the alternatives. Chapter two, which is a natural division encompassing an entire "my son" passage, comprises what amounts to one large conditional sentence with a triple protasis (2:1--"if you receive my words . . ."; 2:3--"yes, if you cry out for insight . . ."; 2:4--"if you seek it . . . and search . . ."), followed by a quadruple apodosis (2:5--"then you will understand the fear of the LORD . . ."; 2:9--"Then you will understand righteousness and justice . . ."; 2:16--"(Then) "you will be saved from the loose woman . . ."; 2:20--"So you will walk in the way of good men . . .," being

⁸E. g., Prov. 12:5a; 14:5b; 24:8.

⁹E. g., Prov. 12:19b; 21:25.

delivered from "the way of evil"--2:12). Manifestly, then, there can be no confusing of the well-defined alternatives--the mutually exclusive ways.

The Commended Way of Wisdom

Prefatory to an understanding of the commended "way of wisdom" (4:11), considerable lexicographical data has relevance. Most frequent among the words denoting the concept of wisdom is חָכְמָה and its plural absolute, חָכְמוֹת .¹⁰ Our English word, "wisdom," serves best to communicate the idea herein. It is the Lord who gives wisdom (2:6), who founded the earth by wisdom (3:19), and against whom no wisdom (of man) can avail (21:30). One is admonished to obtain, pay attention to, and therefore profit from חָכְמָה (1:2; 2:2, 10; 3:13; 4:5, 7; 5:1; 7:4; 8:1, 11; 10:23; 16:16; 17:24; 23:23; 24:3, 14; 28:26; 29:3, 15). This wisdom is to be found in the fear of Yahweh (9:10; 15:33), in prudence (8:12; 14:8, 33), in the mouth of the righteous (10:13; 31:26), and with the humble (11:2; 13:10). Though wisdom is like a fountain gushing forth in a stream (18:4), not all attain it; notably, the fools (1:7; 17:16),

¹⁰Used thirty-nine and four times respectively in the Masoretic text of Proverbs according to Gerhard Lisowsky, Kondordanz zum Hebraischen Alten Testament (Stuttgart: Privileg. Wurt. Bibelanstalt, 1958), loc. cit. The plural forms somewhat of a plural of majesty as seen in its usage with plural verbs (1:20, Septuagint; 9:1; 14:1; in 24:7 the verb has to be supplied).

scoffers (14:6), and men unaided by God (30:3).

The two words הַיָּדְבָרִים and הַיָּדְבָרִים which are germane etymologically, figure prominently in the Book, both meaning, "understanding." As synonyms for wisdom these two words often cannot be distinguished from חָכְמָה , but taken as a whole the references seem to connote the more subjective side of wisdom--that is, wisdom apprehended results in "understanding" or "insight," as it is often translated. Whereas חָכְמָה was instrumental in Yahweh's founding the earth, the parallel line in the couplet indicates the heavens were founded by הַיָּדְבָרִים (3:19). Knowledge of the Holy One is insight (9:10) and many are the exhortations, direct and otherwise, to seek, demonstrate, and profit from such understanding¹¹ (1:2; 2:2, 3, 6, 11; 3:13; 4:1, 5, 7; 5:1; 7:4; 8:1, 14; 9:6; 10:23; 11:12; 14:29; 15:21; 16:16; 17:27; 19:8; 20:5; 23:4, 23; 24:3; 28:16), for one is not to rely on his own (natural) insight (3:5; 30:2), as does a fool (18:2), but whatever the case, no understanding can avail against the Lord (21:30).

In addition to the three main substantives for wisdom (all of which are feminine in gender and may account for the feminine personifications of wisdom), there are a number of other synonymous words of both genders used in Proverbs. These include: שִׂכְלִים or שִׂכְלִים

¹¹References to הַיָּדְבָרִים are underlined in the verses; all others are to הַיָּדְבָרִים .

(masculine), meaning: prudence, insight, good sense. It is never employed in Proverbs in the bad sense of "craftiness" as in Daniel 8:25; rather its use is always in reference to the good connotation (12:8; 13:15; 16:22; 19:11; 23:9), and once in parallel with "favor" it means "good repute" (3:4). Another word sometimes used for craftiness, חָכְמָה (feminine) is likewise always found in Proverbs with the good meaning of "prudence" (1:4; 8:5, 12, and more commonly in its adjectival form חָכֵם (12:23), which easily takes over the function of a substantive (12:16; 13:16; 14:8, 15; 22:3; 27:12, mostly for the "prudent man"). Always translated "sound wisdom," חָכְמָה שְׂרִיפָה (feminine) stands for that efficient wisdom that gives permanent success (2:7; 3:21; 8:14; 18:1). The feminine noun חָכְמָה זְכוּלָה (from חָכַם --to consider, purpose, devise) is usually translated "discretion" (1:4; 2:11; 3:21; 8:12; 14:17), once "reproof" to accommodate a couplet (5:12), and twice it is connected with a man's planning to do evil (12:2; 24:8). The masculine noun חָכְמָה occurring only twice in Proverbs (11:22; 26:16) literally means "taste," but it here seems to be used for refined moral taste, i. e., "discretion."

It is remarkable how often the common word לֵב (masculine) meaning heart, inner man, mind or will has an equivalency of the wisdom concept. The idiom קִיְנוּהוּ לֵב is translated respectively in 15:32 and 19:8 as the one who gains "understanding" and gets "wisdom." Moreover, לֵב often stands idiomatically for a quality which is

lacking in some men,¹² and is translated by the unpretentious word, "sense" (6:32; 7:7; 9:4; 10:13, 21; 11:12; 12:11; 15:21; 17:18; 24:30). There is also the use of \aleph in a compound form $\aleph\text{-}\aleph\text{-}\aleph$, meaning "wise of heart," in which both words compounded are used as they normally are (11:29; 16:21; 23:15). The word \aleph used twenty-nine times throughout Proverbs has the meaning of discipline (of the moral nature), chastening, or correction. In the largest percentage of these instances it is the $\aleph\text{-}\aleph$ (15:33) that is implied or stated, rather than mere physical correction. In other words, discipline in the moral-mental realm is so closely associated with the acquisition and retention of wisdom that it can be equated with it for all practical purposes.¹³

Having examined the abstract words employed for the wisdom complex, brief attention is now directed to the four coordinate and overlapping literary molds of the wisdom commended in Proverbs. These are: (1) \aleph ;¹⁴ (2) the satire, taunt, figure or enigma;¹⁵

¹²Not to be confused with the copious use of \aleph as a component part of man's being in the metaphysical sense.

¹³Under the fourth subsection of this treatment on wisdom, infra, p. 36, the way of \aleph is traced along its Scriptural foundations in detail.

¹⁴Supra, pp. 4-9 for a fuller treatment.

¹⁵R. S. V. has "figure" here in 1:6, but translates it "taunt" in Hab. 2:6, its only other occurrence in the Old Testament.

(3) the words of the wise; (4) the wise men's riddles or dark sayings. All four are apparently parallel in pairs (1:6) in a structure of ABAB, the "words of the wise" (found also in 22:17; 24:23) being synonymous with the לְדַבְרֵי חָכְמָה , and the riddle of the wise men with the enigma. This is not to imply that distinct literary forms of these are readily discernible, since Hebrew thinking as reflected in this book is more synthetic (heaping together all available synonyms) than analytic (evincing distinct forms consistently), as in an Elizabethan sonnet, with its fourteen lines and precise rhyming scheme.

The anticipated result from the setting forth of wisdom is that men will receive, get, acquire, buy, and keep this wisdom that they might be "wise of heart" (10:8; 16:21), a "man of understanding" (אִישׁ חָכְמָה 10:23; 15:21; 20:5 or אִישׁ מְבָרֵךְ 28:2; cf. 17:10), "a prudent person"¹⁶ (אִישׁ מְבָרֵךְ 12:23¹⁷ or אִישׁ מְבָרֵךְ : participle, not the noun--15:24; and אִשְׁת׃ חָכְמָה , a "prudent wife"--19:14), a "wise son" (בֶּן חָכְמָה 10:1; 13:1; 15:20; בֶּן חָכְמָה 10:5; בֶּן חָכְמָה 28:7), but he is pre-eminently a "wise man"-- אִישׁ חָכְמָה (16:14; 29:9) or usually in the shortened form חָכְמָה or its plural, as generic terms (1:5, 6; 3:35; 9:8, 9; 10:14; 12:18; 13:20;

¹⁶ Translation by thesis writer.

¹⁷ Other instances without the , but clearly substantives are: 12:16; 13:16; 14:15; 22:3; 27:12.

14:16, 24; 15:12, 31; 18:15; 21:11, 20, 22; 23:24; 25:12; 29:9, 11).

The Theistic Weltanschauung of This Way

The wisdom promulgated in this book is neither fragmented and centrifugal as one might suppose that a literary collection of collections would be, nor is it neutral as to any commitment to ultimate realities, as is so fashionable today in some circles among "the wise" of this world. On the contrary, there is an integrating premise, an emphatic presupposition candidly stated at the beginning of the first collection and reiterated everywhere throughout the collections. It is compacted into one neat little expression--יְהוָה יִרְאַתְךָ --the fear, or awe of, and reverence for Yahweh--as the beginning of all wisdom and knowledge, as the indispensable factor for understanding life, and the key to genuine blessedness. The priority of this expression as a thematic index of the entire work has been virtually undisputed.

"The fear of the LORD" as the "beginning" of knowledge keynotes the book (1:7). It is the "beginning" or "chief part" (רֵאשִׁית) of knowledge, and "knowledge of the Holy One is insight" (9:10b). What insight does this kind of knowledge afford? Fourteen times the characteristic expression יְהוָה יִרְאַתְךָ occurs and five more times the verb, "to fear," takes יְהוָה for an object. An analysis of these expressions reveals the following data.

A. Expressions synonymously parallel with "the fear of the LORD":

1. knowledge--1:29
2. the knowledge of God--2:5
3. the knowledge of the Holy One--9:10

B. Expressions antithetically parallel with "the fear of the LORD":

1. despising wisdom and instruction--1:7
2. hating knowledge--1:29
3. being wise in one's own eyes--3:7
4. pride, arrogance, the way of evil, and perverted speech--8:13
5. being devious in one's ways--14:2
6. letting one's heart envy sinners--23:17
7. hardening one's heart--28:14

C. Factors characteristically inherent in "the fear of the LORD":

1. the beginning of knowledge--1:7
2. hatred of evil--8:13
3. the beginning of wisdom--9:10
4. walking in uprightness--14:2
5. instruction in wisdom--15:33
6. avoidance of evil--16:6
7. obedience to Yahweh--24:21

D. The benefits of "the fear of the LORD":

1. prolongation of life--10:27
2. strong confidence and a refuge for one's children--14:26

3. a fountain of life--14:27
 4. a better life--15:16
 5. life--19:23
 6. riches, honor, and life--22:4
 7. lasting blessedness--28:14; 31:30
- E. Admonitions relative to "fearing Yahweh":
1. Choose the fear of the Lord--1:29 (implicit).
 2. Fear the LORD and turn away from evil--3:7.
 3. Continue in the fear of the LORD all the day--23:17.
 4. Fear the LORD and the king--24:21.

The full import of the יְרֵאָה ; יִסְּרָה must be assessed if one is to rightly determine the message of this book. The passages just treated constitute only about two percent of the content of the entire book, being spread through all the collections. On what basis, therefore, can it be said that this material is indicative of an active theistic Weltanschauung that comprehends the entire collection? There are two justifying reasons for this affirmation:

1. "The fear of the LORD" as it has been presented in the preceding section in terms of its pragmatic overtones was seen to embrace a life of wisdom and knowledge, the avoidance of evil by walking in righteousness, forsaking pride and evil speech in order to continue in "the fear of the LORD." But this is exactly what the entire book is about--how to live, how to live with your fellow man through taking

God into account, how to direct one's life in wisdom. Thus "the fear of the LORD" in this book is not just one co-ordinate fact among many represented there, but it is a governing presupposition molding all that goes into the proverbs and sanctifying even the humblest detail about the "way" of wisdom.

2. The remarkable theism of this book is not solely dependent on the "fear of the LORD" passages by any means. For instance:

Evil men do not understand justice,
but those who seek the LORD understand it completely. (28:5)

Were one to delete all the "fear of the LORD" passages on suspicion of interpolation by later revisors (a highly unwarranted assumption!), the statements about the LORD who "made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble" (16:4) would still constitute an undeniable theistic perspective for the proverbs. There are sufficient statements of such a nature about Yahweh and His relations with mankind to deduce a doctrine of "the fear of the LORD" from them as a logical consequence. This will become more apparent when the component features of this theistic viewpoint are traced in chapters three and five.

Once it was academically fashionable to peruse the Book of Proverbs in the tradition of R. H. Pfeiffer,¹⁸ sorting out the "secular" proverbs from the "sacred" ones. This is no longer the case in

¹⁸Robert H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941) passim, pp. 645-659.

current scholarship, even among those who take a very liberal viewpoint relative to the matters of the introduction of Proverbs. Edgar Jones, for example, is representative of the latest trend.

The book has helped to remove the artificial gulf between the sacred and the secular. Although the Wisdom writers deal with so many topics that the Western world characterizes as secular, such as how to deal with young people, how to succeed in one's work, maintaining relationships with business men or rich rulers, the underlying principle of the book is that Wisdom or technical efficiency and skill in everyday affairs is not alien to God's purpose. Rather is Wisdom not to be divorced from God but is his gift. There are not two worlds, one belonging to man and one to God, but God's providential activity is apparent in every sphere.¹⁹

In the same vein, Plaut, representing Reformed Judaism, observes:

There are no "secular" proverbs which can be contrasted with "religious" ones; everything on earth serves the purposes of God and is potentially holy. Business, economics, sexual relations, family, government--all these may conform to or depart from the norms of religious morality and social justice, and all of these are, therefore, proper themes for proverbs worthy of inclusion in our Book.²⁰

The theistic posture known as "the fear of Yahweh" is not peculiar to Proverbs but is found also in the other wisdom poetry of the Old Testament. In the one hundred and eleventh division of the Psalms an alphabetic acrostic poem is found entitled: "Praise Yahweh." The Resh line (verse 10) reads:

¹⁹Jones, op. cit., p. 50.

²⁰W. Gunther Plaut, Book of Proverbs (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961), p. 7.

רֵאשִׁית דְּחֵכְמָה יִרְאַת יְהוָה

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."²¹

The same idea is found in Job, substituting "Lord" for "Yahweh."

Behold, the fear of the Lord (יִרְאַת יְהוָה), that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding. (28:28)²²

It would be creating a false impression that "the fear of Yahweh" or "the fear of God" (Elohim, e.g., Genesis 20:11) is to be found only in the poetic literature of the Bible. On the contrary, it occurs frequently as a theistic and ethical imperative meant to profoundly influence life, being widely diffused through the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Writings as has been indicated. Neither does the New Testament discard this concept so basic to Old Testament theology. There the church located in the Holy Land is portrayed as "walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:31).²³

²¹The Psalms contain the following additional references to fearing the LORD: (2:11; 5:7; 15:4; 19:9; 22:23, 25; 25:14; 31:19; 33:8, 18; 34:7, 9, 11; 36:1; 55:19; 60:4; 61:5; 66:16; 67:7; 85:9; 86:11; 90:11; 102:15; 103:11, 13, 17; 111:5; 115:11, 13; 118:4; 119:38, 63, 74, 79; 119:120; 135:20; 145:19; 147:11).

²²Job also has these references to fearing the LORD: 1:9; 4:6; 6:14; 15:4; 22:4; and in Ecclesiastes references to the same are found: 3:14; 5:7; 8:12, 13.

²³Mention is made approximately a dozen times in the New Testament to fearing the LORD in the sense of recognizing his existence in awesome reverence and proper deference (Matt. 10:28/Lu. 12:5; Lu. 18:4; 23:40; Acts 9:31; 13:16, 26; Rom. 3:18; II Cor. 5:11; 7:1; Heb. 5:7 ? ; I Pet. 2:17; Rev. 11:18; 14:7).

For all godly Hebrews "the fear of the LORD" was the theological sine qua non which served to orient all their considerations of the world including themselves. It was their starting point--the beginning of all knowledge and understanding. The immanence of the transcendent God had to be taken into account if the Israelite was "to discern his way" (14:8) in the most practical situations. Such a small thing as correct scales are said to be "the LORD'S" (16:11). To have a Weltanschauung that includes the LORD in everything, that is the way of wisdom!

The Way of Righteousness

Very simply put, the fact is this. The wise man is righteous, or viewed from the other side of the lens, the righteous man is a wise man; note the obvious parallel in 9:9 between the wise man and the just man. The $\text{הַדֶּרֶךְ הַיְשָׁרָה}$ "way of righteousness" (16:31) is the way of those who fear the LORD (14:2); this way delivers from (untimely?) death (10:2; 11:4) and leads into life (11:19; 12:28; 21:21).

Wisdom is related to righteousness in these ways:

1. Wisdom walks in the way of righteousness--8:20
2. All the words of wisdom are righteous--8:8
3. One must have wisdom to understand righteousness and judgment--2:9

Yahweh is connected with the righteous in the following ways:

1. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright--2:7a

2. He is a shield to those who walk in integrity--2:7b

3. He loves those who pursue righteousness--15:9

4. He delights in those of blameless ways--11:20

There are only two kinds of people catalogued in Proverbs.

Several sets of names may be applied to them in terms of opposites.

Here they are the righteous and the unrighteous (with their many synonyms).

The integrity of the upright guides them,
but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them. (11:3)

An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous,
but he whose way is straight is an abomination to the wicked,
(29:27)

Wisdom, then, thrives on righteousness, because only the
righteous way is the wise way. These ways are by no means contrary,
for where one is truly present, there the other must be also.

One solid presupposition of the sages, like an axiom, was
never called in question: namely, that righteousness and
wisdom are identical, that wickedness of any sort is folly.²⁴

The Direction of One's Mind in "The Way"

The imperative: "be wise, and direct your mind in the way"

וְנִשְׂרָה בְּדַרְכֵי יְהוָה לְבָרָה (23:19) covers a major aspect of the

²⁴John F. Genung, "Proverbs," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, edited by James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), IV, 2474.

"conditioning" of wisdom to give knowledge of the way one should go. The method of wisdom with regard to man is twofold. Positively, it means instruction in knowledge: "when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge" (21:11). But since all men have been contaminated by sin (20:9), there is need for discipline or correction of a man's present thoughts and deeds in light of the fear of Yahweh. Corrective discipline is a negative work oriented toward a positive goal. These two vivid thrusts (instruction and correction) are labeled "A" and "B" respectively in the following quotations:

- (A) Because they hated knowledge
- (A) and did not choose the fear of the Lord
- (A) would have none of my counsel,
- (B) and despised all my reproof,
- therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way
- and be sated with their own devices (1:29-31).

That there is a causal connection between wisdom and knowledge can be inferred from an inductive study of all their occurrences. When they are not used together loosely as synonyms (e. g., 1:7; 2:6,10; 24:5), wisdom often is seen to be the causative factor of which knowledge is consequent. Numerous passages illustrate this:

Wise men lay up knowledge (10:14a).

knowledge is easy for a man of understanding (14:6).

the prudent are crowned with knowledge (14:18b).

The mind of him who has understanding seeks knowledge (15:14a).

An intelligent mind acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge (18:15).

when a wise man is instructed he gains knowledge (21:11b).

a wise man listens to advice (12:15b).

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser (9:9).

Such knowledge or instruction when received then becomes in turn the basis for further wisdom relative to future decisions.

Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom for the future (19:20).

There is one other proverb that seems to reverse the relationship and to make wisdom consequent upon knowledge:

Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it (8:33).

The use of the singular pronoun, "it," however, would argue for the parallelism of these two expressions here. The Septuagint, significantly, omits the entire proverb.

Certain other proverbs merely associate wisdom and knowledge without expressing either synonymity or the causative idea:

A prudent man conceals his knowledge (12:23a).

In everything a prudent man acts with knowledge (13:16a).

The tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge (15:2).

The lips of the wise spread knowledge (15:7).

This knowledge, valued more than "choice gold" (8:10), is not to be understood merely in the secular sense of technical "know-how" (cf. Exodus 31:3; 35:31). Knowledge is generally used in Proverbs in a broad all-inclusive sense. Strictly parallel to wisdom in 3:19, 20,

knowledge is linked with Yahweh as one of his creative attributes:

The LORD by wisdom founded the earth;
by understanding he established the heavens;
by his knowledge the deeps broke forth
and the clouds drop down the dew.

In reference to man's acquisition of knowledge and its specific meaning for him, its content is most properly defined as the סֵדֶר־יְהוָה יְהוָה (1:7, 29; 2:5; 9:10; 15:33), especially as this spiritual outlook is brought to bear upon the entire range of life situations that one is likely to encounter in the world. Affording somewhat of a problem is the statement: "The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge (סֵדֶר־יְהוָה), but he overthrows the words of the faithless" (בְּלִיַּיִם)--22:12. Two difficulties emerge: (1) What is meant by Yahweh's "keeping watch over knowledge"? (2) Are the factors in this parallelism incongruous? D. Winton Thomas has a fine suggestion for resolving the difficulty.²⁵ He sees סֵדֶר־יְהוָה as being used in a forensic sense in analogy to similar usage in Arabic and Syriac cognates. Hence, he translates the passage in such a way that it has a very practical reference:

The eyes of Yahweh watch over a lawsuit,
and he subverteth the case of the deceitful.

Moreover, it is axiomatic that: "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel, can avail against the LORD" (21:30).

²⁵D. Winton Thomas, "A Note on סֵדֶר־יְהוָה in Proverbs XXII:12," The Journal of Theological Studies, XIV (April 1963), 94.

This "knowledge" that is contained in Proverbs, vertically oriented by "the fear of the LORD," is in no sense aloof from man in terms of accessibility. Its horizontal dimension is realized by its codification in "the words of the wise" (1:6; 22:17; 24:23; or of the singular wise man: 1:23; 2:1; 4:4, 5, 10, 20; 5:7; 7:1) and in "words of knowledge" (14:7; 19:27; 23:12), which communicate this knowledge by "instruction" (יָדָוּ--1:2, 3, 7, 8; 4:1, 13; 8:10, 33; 10:17; 13:1, 18; 15:5, 32, 33; 19:20, 27; 23:12, 23; 24:32), "counsel" (נִסְיָן--1:25, 30; 8:14; 12:15 and 19:20, 21, "advice"; 20:18; 21:30; יָדָוּ--15:22); "teaching" (יָרָה--1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20, 23; 7:2; 13:14; 31:26)²⁶ and "guidance" (יָצַד--always plural--11:14; 12:5 "counsels"; 20:18; 24:6).

Of the words listed immediately above for the dissemination of knowledge, one word is especially interesting-- יָדָוּ. It forms the link between the positive and negative aspects already touched upon.²⁷ The distinction is roughly that connoted in the English words "instruction" and "discipline." By "instruction" יָדָוּ is so

²⁶The usage of יָרָה in collection IV (25:1-29:27) may have reference to the Law in the technical or Mosaic sense (28:4, 7, 9; 29:18) though none of these is articular which militates against this conclusion. It was not until the writing of Ecclesiasticus (c. 180 B.C.) that the Law and wisdom were equated in Judaism according to Charles T. Fritsch, "Proverbs: Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), IV, 776.

²⁷Supra, p. 33.

translated a good many times: (1:2, 3, 7, 8; 4:1, 13; 10:17; 13:1, 18; 15:5, 32, 33; 19:20, 27; 22:15; 23:13, 23; 24:32). In a number of these instances there is an obvious parallel between רָוַן and wisdom, advice, words of knowledge, understanding: (1:2, 3, 8; 4:1; 8:10; 19:20, 27; 23:12, 13), but, on the other hand, the instances where it is translated "discipline" are to be noted (3:11; 5:12, 23; 6:23; 12:1; 13:24; 15:10; 22:15; 23:12, 13), and its patent parallels with reproof, admonition, and chastisement, even when these are translated "instruction" (10:17; 13:1, 18, 24; 15:5, 32). The Brown, Driver, Briggs lexicon always preserves the idea of discipline, correction, chastisement in its translations of רָוַן , which comes from the verb רָוַן --discipline, chasten, admonish. Therefore when this quality of רָוַן is recognized, regardless of how it is translated, it becomes at once apparent that the concept of correction is far-reaching in the education essential to the way of the wise. Synonyms for same in Proverbs are: נִפְתָּר -- "reproof" -- 1:23, 25, 30; 3:11; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5, 10, 31, 32; 27:5; 29:1, 15; and נִפְתָּר -- "rebuke" -- 13:1; 18:8 (original text); 17:10. So indispensable is correction that it can be said:

He who heeds instruction²⁸ is on the path of life,
but he who rejects reproof goes astray (10:17).

Whoever loves discipline²⁸ loves knowledge,
but he who hates reproof is stupid (12:1).

²⁸ רָוַן

A fool despises his father's instruction²⁸
but he who heeds admonition is prudent (15:5).

He who ignores instruction²⁸ despises himself,
but he who heeds admonition gains understanding (15:32).

This is the recommended way of child training:

Folly is bound in the heart of a child,
but the rod of discipline drives it far from him (22:15).

The rod and reproof give wisdom,
but a child let to himself brings shame to his mother (29:15).

The consequences for one who refuses correction are drastic:

There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way;
he who hates reproof will die (15:10).

He who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck
will suddenly be broken beyond healing (29:1).

The Way of Judicious Words

"The mind of the wise makes his speech judicious" (16:23). One sure place for wisdom to be evidenced is in one's speech. The metonymies for speech are many--lips, tongue, mouth, fruit of one's mouth. The commended type of speech is classified as to kind in the following ways:

1. Having understanding or wisdom: (10:13; 12:18; 14:3; 15:2, 7; 23:9; 31:26).
2. Knowledgeable: (5:2; 19:27; 20:15; 23:12).

3. Righteous, Upright, Pure: (10:11, 20, 21, 31, 32; 12:6; 15:26; 16:13; 26:16).
4. Truthful: (12:19, 22 implicit; 16:13; 21:28; 24:26).
5. Gentle: (15:4; 25:15).
6. Timely: (15:23; 25:11).
7. Pleasant, Gracious: (12:25; 16:21, 24; 17:7; 23:8).

As to its effect, such speech:

1. Keeps and dispenses knowledge: (5:2; 10:32; 15:2, 7).
2. Vitalizes: (10:11, 24; 12:25; 13:21; 15:4; 16:24; 18:21).
3. Delivers: (12:6; 25:15).
4. Satisfies: (12:14; 15:23; 16:13; 18:20).
5. Preserves: (12:18; 13:3; 14:3; 21:23; 22:11).
6. Persuades: (לְקַח לֵב--16:21, 23; 25:15).
7. Endures: (12:19).

Certainly "the words of a man's mouth are deep waters" (18:4); they reveal the nature of the man. "The tongue of the righteous is choice silver" (10:20) and "the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel" (20:15); their value, though stated in material terms, is rare and cherished.

The Way of Diligent Industry

Wisdom's way does not consist of mere thought and word, as crucial as these are. It demands actions, energy, and diligence.

"Wisdom builds her house" (14:1). Wisdom works on the premise:

In all toil there is profit,
but mere talk tends only to want (14:23).

Not satisfied with mere talk, wisdom is diligent (not "hasty"--21:5) in getting on with the work. The proverbs cover a wide variety of occupations. The wise farmer is one who tills his land (12:11; 28:19), keeps oxen to help him (14:4), prepares his field before he builds his house (24:27), and harvests his crops (10:5). He knows better than to follow "worthless pursuits" (28:19) or to sleep in harvest (10:5). The diligent hunter will get precious wealth (12:27). The herdsman is advised to "know well" the condition of his flocks for a well-preserved flock means a good livelihood for him (27:23-27). A slave, whether in the garden, or in the house of his master will be duly rewarded if he works and deals wisely (27:18; 17:2). Even rulers ideally are noted for diligence, "for the hand of the diligent shall rule" (12:24), and it is the glory of kings to search things out (25:2). Of the ideal wife it is said:

She looks well to the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness (31:27).

And the wise father does not neglect to correct his son: "he who loves him is diligent to discipline him" (13:24).

Appetite is a natural inducement to cause man to work (16:26). The sure prospect of the success of the diligent, industrious man also provides an incentive to work:

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance (21:5).

The soul of the sluggard craves, and gets nothing,
While the soul of the diligent is richly supplied (13:4).

A slack hand causes poverty,
but the hand of the diligent makes rich (10:4).

The result, then, is that "the work of a man's hand comes back to him" (12:14). The man who makes his work a specialty by his skill will "get his promotion" if one may slightly modernize the proverb in 22:29.

Yahweh is concerned about a man's deeds. "Will he not requite man according to his work?" (24:12).²⁹ The formula for the diligent man who has the desire to work scintillates with sagacity:

Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established (16:3).

The Paradoxical Way of Humility and Honor:

Wisdom's way here is unique. Honor is never to be sought directly. It is only obtained as a consequence of humility. The twice repeated dictum has it: "humility goes before honor" (15:33; 18:12). Moreover, "he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor" (29:23). The way up is manifestly to go down in humility. This is the paradox that eludes the proud (11:2). Humility is not the whole basis for honor, as subsequently will be seen, but it is a prime requisite that can cancel out other apparently deserving factors.

²⁹The context implies omission of duty to one's fellowman in danger under the guise of ignorance of the circumstances.

Three times in Proverbs humility is used co-ordinately with "the fear of the LORD":

Be not wise in your own eyes; (i. e., be humble.)
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil (3:7).

The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom,
and humility goes before honor (15:33).

The reward for humility and the fear of the LORD
is riches and honor and life (22:4).

This is significant, for just as it is always essential for the wise man to take God into account, reverently remembering that God is over all, and altering his actions accordingly, so he must also have a correct concept of himself which should engender humility. Normally, conceit must be humbled from its self-confidence (3:7), self-propulsion (25:6, 7), and arrogance (18:23), but "he who heeds reproof is honored" (13:18). Therefore, "with the humble is wisdom" (11:2), just as surely as the fact that wisdom begins in "the fear of the LORD" (9:10).

"To the humble he (Yahweh) shows his favor" (3:34) and "the upright enjoy his favor" (14:9). Now humility is of the essence of wisdom (11:2). Is it any wonder that wisdom will honor you if you embrace her (4:8) or receive the gift of her hand (3:16)? "The wise will inherit honor" (3:35), and "a man is commended according to his good sense" (12:8). So "good sense wins favor" (13:15), both God's and man's! This "favor is better than silver or gold (22:1), because "the reward for humility and the fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life" (22:4; cf. 21:21).

The Issue of Wisdom in Life

One of the strongest possible selling points of wisdom is its anticipated outcome in abundant life. "The wise man's path leads upward to life" (15:24), or to put the same thought in other words, "The fear of the LORD leads to life" (19:23). In fact, "wisdom," "the fear of the LORD," "the teaching of the wise," and "the mouth of the righteous" are each described as "a fountain of life" (16:22; 14:27; 13:14; 10:11 respectively). The connection between wisdom, Yahweh, and life is deliberate:

For he who finds me (wisdom) finds life
and obtains favor from the LORD (8:35).

Under another figure wisdom is portrayed as "a tree of life," reminiscent of the Garden of Eden:

She is a tree of life to those who grasp her,
and happy is everyone who holds her fast (3:18).³⁰

Likewise, the concomitants of wisdom:

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life (11:30).

A gentle tongue is a tree of life (15:4).

Righteousness is largely responsible for the security in the wisdom way to life:

He who is steadfast in righteousness will live (11:19).

³⁰The Old Testament: An American Translation, edited by J. M. Powis Smith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), p. 583.

The wage of the righteous leads to life (10:16).

The fear of the LORD prolongs life (10:27).

The desire of the righteous will be granted (10:24).

The hope of the righteous ends in gladness (10:28).

In the path of righteousness is life (12:28).

he who hates bribes will live (15:27).

He who pursues righteousness and kindness will find life and honor
(21:21).

Not only does "the fear of the LORD" lead to life (19:23); it also results in life (22:4) and is said to prolong life (10:27). Though "life" is used in Proverbs in the plain sense of continued existence in proverbs like the first two just cited, in numerous others it speaks of life in its highest dimension of fullness and total well-being. There are all the overtones of security and success in it. Wisdom counsels:

he who listens to me will dwell secure
and be at ease without dread of evil (1:33).

And the wise man adds:

My son, keep sound wisdom and discretion;
let them not escape from your sight,
and they will be life for your soul
and adornment for your neck.
Then you will walk on your way securely
and your foot will not stumble.
If you sit down, you will not be afraid;
when you lie down your sleep will be sweet (3:21-24).

Several of the proverbs are cast in a mold of material success leading to prosperity. Wisdom, a spiritual entity, is "more precious

than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her" (3:15).

Nevertheless, she is directly associated with "riches" in the following ways:

in her left hand are riches and honor (3:16).

Riches and honor are with me,
enduring wealth and prosperity (8:18).

endowing with wealth those who love me,
and filling their treasuries (8:21).

The crown of the wise is their wealth ($\square \uparrow \psi \uparrow$)³¹ (14:24). Though these four proverbs seem to convey the idea of material wealth as the by-product of wisdom, one cannot be entirely sure that riches, wealth, and treasuries are not being used figuratively of psychological or enduring spiritual prosperity. Noticeably absent is any proverb that equates wisdom with the mere acquisition of silver and gold as such.

The opposite, indeed, is taught:

Do not toil to acquire wealth;
be wise enough to desist (23:4).

A miserly man hastens after wealth (28:22).

By the same token, a rich man is not necessarily a wise man (28:11),

though he be wise in his own eyes, and may answer roughly (18:23).

Also the contrast is between wisdom's "enduring wealth and prosperity" (8:18) and the thought that "riches do not last forever" (27:24). The

³¹Rendering of the RSV footnote: its text has "wisdom."

Book of Proverbs, much like Hebrews in the New Testament, is the book of "better's." Five things better than being rich under certain conditions are spelled out:

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD
than great treasure and trouble with it (15:16).

Better is a little with righteousness
than great revenues with injustice (16:8).

It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor
than to divide the spoil with the proud (16:19).

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
and favor is better than silver or gold (22:1).

Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity
than a rich man who is perverse in his ways (28:6).

The question remains: How, or in what way(s) does "the blessing of the LORD" make one rich (10:22)? The debate relative to this question hinges upon one's view of the book as a whole. Does Proverbs seek to tell the Hebrew man how to "get ahead" in life, from a purely secular standpoint, or does it seek to show him how to live? When this question is resolved in one's thinking a whole group of minor questions fall into place. Here, however, the question is not so simple as a direct "either . . . or." Job prospered materially both before and after his great temptation. The decisive factor relative to riches seems to be how they are acquired, for "Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit" (10:2), but "The blessing of the LORD makes rich and

(לֵאמֹר לֹא יוֹסֵף אֵלָיו) hard work adds nothing to it"³² (10:22).

The good life that wisdom teaches is grounded in righteousness;³³ this righteousness is both part of the method and result of wisdom. Hence there is comprehended in this righteousness of God-fearing wisdom the normative virtues and states of the good life. They constitute "spiritual" features of the good life. These are: love (10:12; 15:17; 17:17), forgiveness or mercy (17:9; 28:13), self-control (14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11; 25:16, 28; 29:11), kindness (11:17; 12:10; 14:21, 31; 19:17; 21:21; 31:26), patience and gentleness (15:4; 20:22; 25:15), faithfulness and loyalty (3:3; 12:22; 14:5, 22; 16:6; 19:22; 20:28; 25:13; 28:20), joy (10:28; 12:20; 13:9; 15:15, 23; 16:20; 21:15; 23:24; 28:12; 29:6; 29:17), and peace (3:17; 16:7; 17:1; 29:17).

Humility and honor, already dealt with, figure in here also. The net result is that he who follows the commended way of wisdom enjoys the favor of God (3:34; 8:35; 12:2; 14:9; 18:22). The so-called "spiritual" or intangible, but not indescribable, benefits of wisdom far outweigh whatever material benefits that may accrue to the wise man on account of his wisdom. Yet this wisdom is neither merely metaphysical nor mostly mundane. It is the highest and noblest way of life that is

³²Translation by thesis writer. Lisowski, *op. cit.*, p. 1105 takes לֵאמֹר as subject of the clause and the RSV translates similarly by "toil" in a footnote. Cf. a similar usage of the word in 5:10 and 14:23.

³³Supra, pp. 31, 32.

possible to man. For security in life, it is unsurpassed:

The fear of the LORD leads to life;
and he who has it rests satisfied;
he will not be visited by harm (19:23).

The Sinister Way of Folly

The baneful Weltanschauung of the fool can be expressed by one word, folly. At almost every point folly produces the antithesis of the way of wisdom. In general three grades of fools can be distinguished.

These are:

1. The naive: ($\text{לֵךְ} \text{לֵךְ}$)--simple, or open-minded). Such are usually young (7:7), believe everything (14:15), and go on to acquire folly (14:18), because of inexperience (22:3; 27:12). They are killed by their turning away (1:32); they can learn wisdom, however, (8:5), when they see the scoffer punished (19:25; 21:11).

2. The common fool: ($\text{לֵךְ} \text{לֵךְ}$)--stupid fellow, ignoramus--most frequently used word in Proverbs for a fool; $\text{לֵךְ} \text{לֵךְ}$ --a senseless one who is full of himself--12:15; $\text{לֵךְ} \text{לֵךְ}$ --one who is senseless and disgraceful--used only three times in Proverbs, but is used in Psalms for the practical atheist (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). These designations do not denote a lack of native intelligence so much as they do a lack of purpose and direction, of ethics and moral knowledge.

3. The sophisticated fool: ($\text{לֵךְ} \text{לֵךְ}$)--Qal active participle of $\text{לֵךְ} \text{לֵךְ}$ --a scorners or scoffer. Such scoffers delight in their scoffing (1:22), do

not like reproof (9:8; 15:12), seek wisdom in vain (14:6), are an abomination to men (24:9), and are ultimately recipients of Yahweh's scorn (3:34). In short:

"Scoffer" is the name of the proud, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride (21:24).

Just as there are three kinds of fools discernible, there are also three facets of folly, that overlapping to some degree as they are, nevertheless, constitute the three general "ways" that characterize folly. They are:

1. The way of delusive pride
2. The way of unrighteousness and sin
3. The way of perverted speech

Two of the proverbs evince this triplicity of folly:

The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.

(1) Pride and arrogance and (2) the way of evil and (3) perverted speech I hate (8:13).

If you have been foolish, (1) exalting yourself, or (2) if you have been devising evil, (3) put your hand to your mouth (30:32).

Each of these "ways" then warrants proper examination.

The Way of Delusive Pride

At the heart of the "folly of fools" (14:8) is the forsaking of the integrating world-and-life view comprehended in "the fear of the LORD" and the substitution of self in the center of all things. Inevitably pride

becomes a common denominator for all those first millennium B. C. "existentialists" who persist in the off-balanced notion that all life orbits around their personal existence, while rejecting the fear of the LORD which sees and values all things as they relate to God in His sovereignty and grandeur. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (12:15). He is defined as a fool in terms of this delusion:

He who trusts in his own mind is a fool (28:26).

The wisdom of a prudent man is to discern his way,
but the folly of fools is deceiving (14:8).

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in expressing his opinion (18:2).

The fool, though totally lacking in wisdom and knowledge (1:7, 22; 10:21; 14:7, 33; 15:7; 24:7), has not assessed his deficiency; rather, when viewed from the bent perspective of "his own eyes," he finds himself "wise" (26:5, 12, 16). One of these proverbs is quite intriguing in its employment of a literary device which makes one quality of a fool more despicable than the fool himself:³⁴

Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him (26:12).

Pride is not only associated with the introspection of a fool, but also with his external appearance to others. "Haughty eyes" (21:4) and "lofty . . . eyes" (30:13) indicate a "proud heart."

³⁴Cf. Prov. 29:20 which uses the same literary mold to castigate a man who is "hasty in his words."

"A man's pride will bring him low" (29:23), bring disgrace upon him (11:2), and imminent destruction (16:18; 18:12). That which the fool forgot in his egocentrism--the existence of Yahweh--becomes his downfall as the following anthology illustrates:

Every one who is arrogant is an abomination to the LORD;
be assured, he will not go unpunished (16:5; cf. 6:16,17).

The LORD tears down the house of the proud (15:25).

When a man's folly brings his way to ruin,
his heart rages against the LORD (19:3).

An acute form of pride is known as insolence, and insolence leads regularly to strife--the clash of two contending egos. The first half of 13:10 reads: רַק-בְּזִדּוֹן יִתְּצֵן דְּמָצָה, which the Revised Standard Version has translated: "By insolence the heedless make strife"; the Old Testament: An American Translation, "Pride causes nothing but strife"; the King James Version, "Only by pride cometh contention"; the Septuagint, κακὸς μεθ' ὑβρεως πράσσει κακά (changing רַק to וְ). The author of this thesis presumes to add one more translation, retaining the רַק of the Masoretic text: "only by insolence will strife flare up." "A fool's lips bring strife" (18:6). The immediate cause of the strife may be one of several things: hatred (10:12), scoffing (22:10), anger (15:18; 29:22; 30:33), perverseness (16:28; 17:19; 26:21), greed (28:25), but the remote and fundamental cause of the strife is rooted in one's egocentricity and his struggle to maintain it against all obstacles. The truly honorable ego will be free from strife experiences:

It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife;
but every fool will be quarreling (20:3)!³⁵

The Way of Unrighteousness and Sin

"To turn away from evil is an abomination to fools" (13:19). He lacks the fear of the LORD which causes one to avoid evil (16:6; 8:13). His "way" is said to lead him astray (12:26), and his iniquities ensnare him (5:22).

"The devising of folly is sin" (24:9), and sin overthrows the wicked (13:6). The designations for the foolish are easily borrowed from the nomenclature of hamartiology. These abound in the proverbs, e. g., sinner(s) (𐤀𐤓𐤍𐤏𐤍) -- 1:10; 11:31; 13:21; 14:21; 23:17; wicked (𐤀𐤓𐤍𐤏𐤍) -- 2:22; 3:25, 33; 4:14, 19; 5:22; 10:3, 6, 7, plus sixty-five more substantive occurrences throughout the rest of Proverbs; the guilty -- 21:8; evil-doers -- 10:29; 21:15; 24:19; and evil man/men (𐤀𐤓𐤍𐤏𐤍) -- 4:14; 11:21; 12:13; 14:19; 17:11; 24:1, 20; 28:5; 29:6; and the evil woman -- 6:24. These general captions can be further subdivided by analysis to find familiar types of sinners:

REBELS	There are those who curse their father and do not bless their mothers (30:11).
HYPOCRITES	There are those who are pure in their own eyes but are not cleansed of their filth (30:12).

³⁵Exclamation point supplied.

PROUD

There are those--how lofty are their eyes,
how high their eyelids lift! (30:13).

EXTORTIONERS

There are those whose teeth are swords
whose teeth are knives,
to devour the poor from off the earth
the needy from among men (30:14).

Into the vacuum created in the mind by the absence of wisdom's truth (8:7; 22:21; 23:23) deceit establishes residence: "Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil" (12:20), and "the folly of fools is deceiving" (14:8). Even more, hatred for one's fellowman thrives upon deceit as a cover-up (26:19, 24-26; 27:6). Pretense is not uncommon as a social phenomenon in all strata of society (13:7). In business an inaccurate scale is taboo, an abomination--no less (11:1), because it is an instrument of deceit.

A concise hamartiological catalog is to be found in 6:16-19. These seven "abominations" Yahweh hates:

1. "haughty eyes," i. e., pride and arrogance
2. "a lying tongue," i. e., deceit and falsehood
3. "hands that shed innocent blood," i. e., murder and assault
4. "a heart that devises wicked plans," i. e., scheming imagination
5. "feet that make haste to run to evil," i. e., a predilection for wrong-doing
6. "a false witness who breathes out lies," i. e., malicious betrayal of another by slander
7. "a man who sows discord among brothers," i. e., a strife-maker

The rhetorical form "six . . . seven" means "six or seven" but does

not exhaust the list of things that God hates.³⁶ Most, if not all, of the iniquity featured above concerns man-to-man relations. Therefore, to tabulate the whole scope of sins in Proverbs, the Decalogue will be used for comparison as a criterion of ethical and devotional (not ceremonial) norms under the Old Covenant. It has not been thought necessary to go into lengthy discussions of these because succeeding chapters treat of God and interpersonal relations. Roman numerals alone indicate the commandments in accordance with the Lutheran and Roman Catholic system of numbering them.

I. Chapter two counsels, but does not command the fear of the LORD and the knowledge of God. The idea of putting God first is definitely here, though the method of motivation is altered. In a negative way the loose woman is said to have forgotten "the covenant of her God" (2:17), which is equivalent to denying God His first place in her life. There are no admonitions about the evils of idolatry or allusions to same.

II. In 30:7-10 the author asks for two things (truth and a sufficient but not superfluous supply of material provisions) lest he in an unguarded or desperate moment should profane God's name:

³⁶Crawford H. Toy, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs," The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1899), p. 127.

lest I be full and deny thee,
and say "who is the LORD?"
or lest I be poor, and steal,
and profane the name of my God.

III. Nothing at all in Proverbs is to be found relative to keeping the sabbath day as a holy day.

IV. Numerous proverbs mention parental honor or the violation of it. "A fool despises his father's instruction" (15:5) and thus brings shame and sorrow to his father and his mother (10:1; 28:7; 29:15). The worst offenses of this kind are: violence against parents (19:26), cursing them (20:20; 30:11), disregarding and despising them when old (23:22), stealing from them (28:24).

The eye that mocks a father
and scorns to obey a mother
will be picked out by the ravens of the valley
and eaten by the vultures (30:17).

V. When this commandment is understood in its larger dimensions as does the New Testament (Matthew 5:21, 22; I John 3:15) and Luther³⁸ it includes not only the overt act of murder but also the censure of a loveless heart condition of man with respect to his neighbor (10:12). Hatred is genuinely deplored in the proverbs (9:8; 10:18; 15:17; 19:7; 26:24, 26; 29:10); also, oppression (14:31; 28:16), uncontrolled anger (29:11, 22; 30:33):

³⁸Luther's Small Catechism, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), pp. 47, 48.

A stone is heavy and sand is weighty,
 but a fool's provocation is heavier than both.
 Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming;
 but who can stand before jealousy? (27:3, 4);

violence (1:19; 3:31; 4:17; 10:6, 11; 11:16; 13:2; 16:29; 19:26; 21:7; 24:2, 15; 26:6), cruelty (11:17; 12:10; 27:4; 28:16; 29:10), revenge (6:34). Interestingly, war is not proscribed but admonition is given that it be waged with wisdom (21:22; 20:18; 24:6).

VI. "He who commits adultery has no sense" (6:32). The whole passage 6:24-35 warns against the evil woman, or foreign woman, who is a man's wife (6:26 Hebrew). She is described in 9:13-18 as a foolish woman to be avoided. There are other passages as well: (2:16-19, strange woman; 5:3-23, strange and alien; 6:24, evil and alien; 7:5-27, strange; 22:14, strange; 23:27, 28, harlot and alien; 29:3, harlots; 30:20, adulterous woman. It is problematic to determine if the "strange" (אֲרָמִית) woman, or the "foreign" or "alien" (אֲרָמִיָּה) woman is indeed a foreigner or if she is only a chance acquaintance, or only "strange" in that a man is said to be "one flesh" with his wife (Genesis 2:24) and this woman would be "strange" or "foreign" to him in that she would not be his wife. Bostrom construes the strange women to be aliens in or around Israel and contends that a special mark of the fertility cults was intercourse between people of different races.³⁹

³⁹Gustav Bostrom, Proverbiastudien (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1935), p. 129f.

VII. The references to stealing are these: 6:30, 31; 28:20 (?), 24; 29:24; 30:9, 14. Removal of the ancient boundary marks is tantamount to stealing land (22:28; 23:10).

VIII. The false witness speaks lies against his neighbor (11:9) without cause (6:19; 12:17; 14:5; 24:28; 25:18; 26:28), yet such a "betrayor" (14:25) will not go unpunished (19:5, 9) but will perish (21:28). Indeed, "he who utters slander is a fool" (10:18), and even "he who belittles his neighbor lacks sense" (11:12). Flattery, by smooth words and calling the bad good, is essentially a false witness (2:16(?); 6:24(?); 7:5(?), 21(?); 26:28; 27:14; 28:23; 29:5).

IX. and X. Not a few proverbs involve either statements or prohibitions of covetousness: (6:25; 13:2; 15:27; 21:26--"all day long the wicked covets"; 23:3, 6; 27:20--"never satisfied are the eyes of man"; 28:22). Envy grows out of a sort of frustrated covetousness. One is not to envy evil men (3:31; 23:17; 24:1, 19).

The Way of Opprobrious Speech

A righteous man hates falsehood,
but a wicked man acts shamefully and disgracefully (13:5).

It is characteristic that "fools proclaim their folly" (12:23). Their mouths "feed on folly" (15:14) and "pour out folly" (15:2). Garrulous speech is so typical of a fool (10:14, 19) that:

Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise
when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent (17:28).

Other key facts concerning a fool's speech include these:

1. His speech is perverse, i. e., "twisted," "crooked"--distorted (10:31; cf. 17:20; 19:1).
2. His speech brings strife and invites trouble (18:6).
3. His speech is hastily formulated (29:20), answering before he hears (18:13).
4. His speech lacks knowledge (15:7).
5. His "mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to himself" (18:7; cf. 12:13).

Not only is folly's speech foolish; it is all too often false as well. A lying tongue will not last long (12:19), for "Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD" (12:22). Therefore, all forms of oral deceit including the false testimony are doomed. Other forms of foolish and often false speech that warrant disapproval are whispering, gossiping, and talebearing (11:13; 16:28; 17:9; 18:8; 20:19; 25:9, 23; 26:20, 22).

Whenever folly speaks volubly it is twice as treacherous:

Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel
are smooth lips with an evil heart (26:23).

The Consequences of the Way of Folly

"The devising of folly is sin" (24:9) and "sin overthrows the wicked" (13:6). "The way of the wicked" is said to lead them astray (12:16). Sin traps the wicked (5:22; 12:13; 29:16, 25) and implicates them in disastrous consequences (10:21). To begin with, folly itself, is not only the product but also the punishment of fools (16:22); such people

have to live with their own Weltanschauung, which is distorted, disillusioning, and ultimately dissatisfying. The consequences of folly as a way of life are dismally devastating, intensifying with the passage of time.

Panic. "What the wicked dreads will come upon him" (10:24). His fears will be justified, "when panic strikes . . . like a storm and . . . calamity comes like a whirlwind . . ." (1:27). Wisdom whose reproofs were ignored will deride such a one in the panic of his calamity (1:26), which is likely to arrive very suddenly (3:25; 6:15; 24:22; 29:1).

Poverty. The cause of poverty is presented as lying not so much with a faulty viewpoint, which instruction in wisdom could correct (13:18), as it is in a lack of will to action, better known as "laziness" (6:6-11; 10:4, 5; 12:27; 19:15; 20:4, 13; 23:21; 24:30-34; 28:19). Stinginess (11:24; 28:22), and the love of pleasure (21:17; 23:21) are also responsible causes for poverty. Yet not all poverty overtakes one on the basis of indolence, greed, or sensuality, for there is such a thing as the poor man who maintains his integrity (28:6).

Pain. Oddly enough, the distress and pangs of soul created by folly do not affect the fool to any considerable degree, except in the case of the drunkard (23:29-35) and adulterer (6:33), but rather they are inflicted mainly upon his parents and associates (10:1, 10; 13:17; 15:27; 17:21, 25). Because his sin is "like sport" to him (10:23), he does not discover the devastation of his folly until too late.

Shame. The activities of the wicked are shameful (13:5; 18:3), whether he be a slave (14:35) or a son (17:2). Such a one, because of pride (11:2) is usually the last one to recognize his or her shame (9:13), if at all; in fact "fools exalt [Hebrew] disgrace" (3:35). The parent or spouse, however, bears the full brunt of the associated shame (10:5; 12:4; 19:26; 28:7; 29:15). His name is said to rot (10:7) after he departs this life.

Destruction, Death, and Sheol. The final end of the fool in his folly is to find that "the way of error leads to death" (12:28) and "he who pursues evil will die" (11:19):

He dies for lack of discipline,
and because of his great folly he is lost (5:23; cf. 15:10).

Moreover:

all who hate me [wisdom] love death (8:36).

There is a way that seems right to a man, [i. e., his own way]
but its end is the way to death (14:12; 16:25).

A man who wanders from the way of understanding
will rest in the assembly of the dead (21:16).

The "snares of death," i. e., death-traps, are all about (13:14; 14:27; 21:6). The house (2:18; 7:27; 9:18) and feet (5:5) of the strange woman, for instance, lead alike to death, and he who despises "his ways" (19:16; Hebrew) or "the word" (13:13) will die; only righteousness delivers from this kind of death (10:2; 11:4).

The destruction of such a one is brought on himself (13:13), though

executed by Yahweh (10:29), and is preceded by haughtiness (16:18; 18:12). Its celerity is only exceeded by its completeness; it is beyond rectifying (29:1). Those who pass off the scene go down to the Pit (1:12), Sheol (1:12; 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:11, 24; 23:14; 27:20; 30:16) or Abaddon (destruction, ruin)--(15:11; 27:20), the destination of the departed dead.

CHAPTER III

PROVERBIAL THEOLOGY PROPER

Monotheism

Who has ascended to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered the wind in his fists?
Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is his name, and what is his son's name?
Surely you know! (30:4).

Who is God but who He is, and who has ever found Him out? The proverbs pulsate with theism as author Agur has just led his hearers to consider. Though Albright sees a high percentage of non-Israelite matter imported into Proverbs, which assumption must be investigated on its own merits, he nevertheless admits that "Proverbs . . . is saturated with Israelite theism and morality."¹ Though Israel was surrounded by polytheistic societies, the proverbs that expressed her way of life were strictly monotheistic. Yahweh the God of her covenant history is the only God she recognizes. In the words of Paterson:

All their the Sages teaching rests on belief in the great and holy God, source of all Wisdom, who alone can direct man in a meaningful and satisfying way of life.²

¹W. F. Albright, "Some Canaanite-Phoenician Sources of Hebrew Wisdom," Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East, Vol. III in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), 13.

²John Paterson, The Wisdom of Israel: Job and Proverbs, book 11

Even with the extensive proverbs on God's sovereignty, the question is not "God" versus "gods," but it is God's control over men and over the king that is crucial. That idolatry was not a going thing has been implied already from the absence of any wisdom admonitions concerning it, although it is acknowledged that this is merely an argumentum e silentio.

Thus the theistic position in Proverbs is monotheism, belief in one God who alone is over all, without delving into or pronouncing dogmas about the question of the unipersonality or tripersonality of God. The quotation from 30:4 rendered above: "What is his name, and what is his son's name?" should not be construed necessarily as an affirmation of the Trinity. Recognizing its poetic license, it simply means: Can you tell anything at all about Him? Can you identify the family name?³

The Names of God

The generic term for God, $\square^{\prime}\square^{\prime}\text{ל}^{\prime}\text{ל}^{\prime}\text{ל}^{\prime}$, occurs seven times in Proverbs: (2:5, 17; 3:4; 14:9; 25:2; 30:5, 9). In none of these references

in Bible Guides, edited by Wm. Barclay and F. F. Bruce (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 90.

³Gottfried Kuhn, Beiträge zur Erklärung des Salomonischen Spruchbuches (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1931), p. 78. "Wie heisst er, und wie heisst seine Familie?" The Septuagint translates with a plural, ἡ τί ὄνομα τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτοῦ.

does it mean pagan deities. In 2:5 and 3:9 by the use of parallelism it is equated with Yahweh, as the name of God:

lest I be full, and deny thee,
and say "Who is the LORD?" (יְהוָה)
or lest I be poor, and steal,
and profane the name of my God (אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה)--30:9.

God's superlative knowledge (3:4, 20), His glory (25:2), His word(s) (30:5, 6), His name (30:9), His covenant (2:17), His faithful compassion (30:5) and His judgment (14:9; 30:6) all find mention in connection with the designation אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה.

Much more frequent in Proverbs is the personal name of Israel's covenant God. His name, יְהוָה --Yahweh, occurs eighty-seven times plus all the pronouns which have Yahweh as their antecedent. Each of these references will receive proper treatment under the discussion on the attributes and activities of God in Proverbs.

The personification of Wisdom in the sections 8:1-9:6, 11; 1:20-33; 7:4; 14:1, warrants consideration here. Is the personification simply a literary device for instruction, or do these sections, or any one of them, represent a hypostasis of quintessential wisdom? That is, does Wisdom represent a member of the Trinity, as the Godhead is known in the New Testament? The crucial passage for investigation is 8:22f.:

The LORD created (קָנָה) --basic meaning: get, acquire)
me at the beginning of his way⁴ (דַּרְכָּיו)
the first of his acts of old.

⁴RSV has substituted "work" for "way."

Ages ago I was set up ($\overline{\text{׀}}\overline{\text{׀}}\overline{\text{׀}}$ --set, install)
at the first before the beginning of the earth (8:22, 23).

When he established the heavens I was there (8:27).

When he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master workman (8:29, 30).

Imschoot rejects the thought of God's "acquisition" of wisdom on the
basis of Isaiah 40:13, 14:

La sagesse de Dieu n'est pas chez lui une qualite acquise;
car personne n'a pu la lui enseigner, ne lui montrer le chemin
d'intelligence.⁵

The translation of $\overline{\text{׀}}\overline{\text{׀}}\overline{\text{׀}}$ as "he created," though without parallel
elsewhere in Proverbs,⁶ does have parallels in other parts of the
Old Testament, e.g., (Genesis 14:19, 22; Deuteronomy 32:6; Psalm
139:13). Thus to translate--"Yahweh created me"--is an acceptable
translation and is only beset by theological difficulty if the personifica-
tion is dropped as a literary form in favor of an hypostatized Wisdom
that is no less than God. It is true that Christ is presented in the New
Testament as "the wisdom of God" (I Corinthians 1:24) to the Greeks
who were enamoured with philosophy and could not understand the
cross, yet this by no means necessitates the interpretation of every
Old Testament passage that mentions God's wisdom, even where that

⁵P. van Imschoot, Theologie de L'ancien Testament in Series III, BIBLIOTHEQUE DE THEOLOGIE, Vol. II, Tome I (Tournai, Belgium: Desclee and Co., 1954), 64.

⁶It is used there frequently for "acquiring" or "buying."

wisdom is personified for color and emphasis as having reference directly to the second member of the Trinity. The personifications being consistently feminine (e. g., "her voice"--1:20; 8:1; "her house"--9:1; 14:1; "my sister"--7:4) also militates against this. Therefore, it is concluded that wisdom is an attribute of God ("The LORD by wisdom founded the earth"--3:19), but wisdom is neither to be taken in Proverbs as a terminus technicus for a hypostasis of God, nor to be substituted as a name of God. Admittedly the line is a fine one between literary personification and actual hypostatization but it is there and needs to be recognized. The relation of Proverbs' Wisdom to Christ has been judiciously assessed by D. B. Botte, quoted by Imschoot: "Cette personification devenait, au moins sous certains rapports, le type de la personne divine revelee dans le Christ."⁷

The Attributes of God

The designation of God as the "Holy One" (9:10; 30:3) is at the same time a title or name of God as well as the predication of an attribute. This attribute is further illuminated by cognizance of the "abominations to the LORD" which reveal His true character of holiness and righteousness; these abominations to Him are: (1) a perverse man--3:32; (2) the thoughts of the wicked--6:18; 11:20; 15:26; (3) lying lips--12:22; 6:17, 19;

⁷Imschoot, op. cit., p. 236.

(4) deceit--11:1; 20:10, 23; (5) arrogance--6:17; 16:5; (6) a readiness to do evil--6:18; (7) assault--6:17; (8) disunity among brothers--6:19; (9) the sacrifice of the wicked--15:8; (10) the way of the wicked--15:10; (11) the prayer of the disobedient--28:9; (12) injustice--17:15. As a corollary to the last factor, justice is to be recognized as one of God's attributes (21:3; 28:5; 29:26).

More is said about omniscience than about any of the other absolute, non-communicable attributes of God. The attribute is portrayed in terms of "the eyes of the LORD," which are in every place keeping watch on the evil and the good (3:4; 5:21; 15:3; 22:12; 24:18). Nothing is hidden from His vision, neither Sheol nor Abaddon, "how much more the hearts of men" (15:11)! His separation "far from the wicked" (15:29) is purely functional, i. e., far from helping the wicked, as the parallelism would indicate. His immanence is assured in that "he hears the prayer of the righteous" (15:29).

Other attributes of Yahweh either stated or implied in Proverbs include these: (1) love--3:12; 15:9; (2) goodness--19:14; (3) grace/mercy--10:3; 15:25; 20:22; 22:23; (4) wisdom--2:6, 7; 3:19; 16:4; (5) glory--25:2; (6) truth--12:22; 16:11; (7) wrath--22:14; 24:18.

The Activities of God

The acts of God are just as revealing of His essential nature as are His attributes.

Creation

Yahweh founded the earth and established the heavens, the deeps and the clouds (3:19, 20). Moreover, in 8:22-31 the creative acts are specified, beginning with creation of wisdom like a master workman who was at His side in the formation of the mountains and hills, springs and deeps, and their limitations. He established the ends of the earth (30:4). The creation of man is acknowledged and gives rise to a title of God as man's "Maker" (14:31; 17:5; 22:2). The "hearing ear" and the "seeing eye" are singled out as specimens of God's creative genius (20:12; 29:13).

Sovereign Control of All Creation and Human Events

One of the most salient points of theological interest in Proverbs is the overt stress on the sovereignty of God. By listing the passages below one will see how thoroughly the control of God permeates everything:

1. The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble (16:4).
2. The plans of the mind belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD (16:1).
3. A man's mind plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps (16:9).
4. Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established (19:21).

5. The lot is cast in the lap
but the decision is wholly from the LORD (16:33).
6. The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the LORD (21:31).
7. The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD;
he turns it wherever he will (21:1; cf. 16:10).

Salvation

The way of God's salvation and man's response becomes the content of chapter five, and is dealt with in full there.

Judgment

The LORD is noted for his evaluation of mankind. He tests (17:3) and weighs (21:2; 24:12) the heart of man, and likewise weighs his spirit (16:2). Man's judgment of himself is always biased--"All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes" (16:2), though his human spirit has been given him as the "lamp of the LORD searching all his innermost parts" (20:27). Thus it is that "the lamp of the wicked will be put out" (24:20), i. e., they will die in their sins, and "the righteous will look upon their downfall" (29:16).

Yahweh condemns a man of evil devices (12:2; cf. 19:29) and scorns the wicked (14:9). His curse is upon their house (3:33) and He tears it down (15:25). His curse is also upon him who hides his eyes from the poor (28:27). Yahweh takes up the cause of the poor (22:23) and the fatherless (23:11) and takes their case to judgment.

It is reiterated again and again that evildoers and evil thinkers "will not go unpunished" (11:21, 31; 16:5; 17:5; 19:5, 9), because a man gets justice from the LORD (29:26).

There are two principally indirect methods of Yahweh's punishment: (1) through the king--16:10; 20:8 and "disaster from them (Yahweh and the king) will rise suddenly"--24:22; (2) through bringing a man's evil works down upon his own head:

He who digs a pit will fall into it
and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling (26:27).

He who misleads the upright into an evil way
will fall into his own pit (28:10).

The mouth of a loose woman is a deep pit;
he with whom the LORD is angry will fall into it (22:14).

The expectation of the wicked will end only in God's wrath (11:23), for "the LORD is . . . destruction to evildoers"(10:29).

Not so is Yahweh's fatherly treatment of those whom he loves; it is discipline for them and not destruction:

My son do not despise the LORD'S discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights (3:11, 12).

CHAPTER IV

PROVERBIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In the use of "anthropology" in this chapter, it is anthropology in the sense of the doctrine of man in its psychological and theological dimensions that is considered. The proverbs are freighted with anthropology in this sense, though it must be collated from many segments in order to see the whole picture of man.

The Composite Unity of Man

In keeping with the Old Testament as a whole, one encounters "man" in the proverbs of Israel as $\psi^{\prime}N$ or $\square\uparrow N$, with the former expression occurring oftener. Besides these generic terms man is presented in terms of his integral components, but not in any formal scheme. For the Hebrew, "thinking is to grasp a totality."¹ Therefore, whatever specific part of man that might find mention in a proverb, it was not thought of analytically as an isolated factor, but as an aspect of man in his totality. When a constituent part is specified, there is almost always in the understood usage a synecdochical conversion, because "It is not an isolated part of man that acts but the soul

¹Johannes Pedersen, Israel, Its Life and Culture (London, Oxford University Press, 1926), I, 108.

in its totality."²

Fifty-four times the Hebrew word, $\psi\text{ׁ} \text{ׁ} \text{ׁ}$, occurs in Proverbs. It normally means man as a living, feeling human being. Several times it takes the place of a reflexive pronoun when it is used with a pronominal suffix (6:32; 8:36; 11:17; 15:32; 19:8; 21:23; 22:5), standing for the man himself. Moreover, $\psi\text{ׁ} \text{ׁ} \text{ׁ}$ is used often to mean "life," as continued or qualitative existence (1:19; 3:22; 6:26; 7:23; 13:8; 16:17; 19:16; 20:2; 22:23; 23:14; 29:10, 24), to mean "appetite," (6:30; 10:3; 13:4, 25; 16:26; 23:2; 27:7),³ or for "soul" as feelings or emotions (2:10; 13:19; 14:10; 21:10; 25:13; 29:17; 31:6). Other noteworthy distinctions are these: $\psi\text{ׁ} \text{ׁ} \text{ׁ}$ is predicated to Yahweh (6:16--anthropomorphically as a center of feeling) and also to a beast (12:10), as living flesh. It has some interesting parallels, e.g., with $\square\text{ׁ} \text{ׁ} \text{ׁ}$ --bones, self (16:24), with --heart (24:12), and mention is made of $\psi\text{ׁ} \text{ׁ} \text{ׁ} \text{ׁ} \text{ׁ}$, linking blood with $\psi\text{ׁ} \text{ׁ} \text{ׁ}$ (28:17).

It is significant that there is no word in Hebrew that is identical in meaning to the Greek, $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$, body, as modern commentators are quick to point out.⁴ This means that other words such as "soul" or

²Ibid., I, 105.

³Cf. also Prov. 25:25 which speaks of the thirsty $\psi\text{ׁ} \text{ׁ} \text{ׁ}$.

⁴E.g., Joseph Fichtner, Theological Anthropology (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1963), p. 5.

"flesh" must convey corporeal concepts in view of the totality principle. Pedersen's remark is helpful here: "The soul is more than the body, but the body is a perfectly valid manifestation of the soul."⁵ The word רוּחַ , used five times in Proverbs as "wind," is used sixteen other times mostly for man's mental disposition. Like the soul it is more than the body (18:14), and yet "a downcast spirit dries up the bones" (17:22). It easily becomes a synonym for "heart" (cf. 16:2 with 17:3). Once in 20:27 נְשִׁמָּה , breath, appears meaning much the same as רוּחַ .

Many of the parts of the body are cited either in synecdoche or metonymy, but none oftener than לֵב --heart or mind.⁶ The heart is an ethical center for either good or bad conduct: (3:1, 3; 4:4, 23; 5:12; 6:14, 18, 25; 9:4; 11:20; 22:17; 26:23; 26:25; 28:14), an emotional center: (7:25; 12:25; 13:12; 14:10, 13, 30; 15:13, 15, 30; 17:22; 24:17; 25:20; 27:9), a center for intelligence, i. e., mind, or sense: (6:32; 7:7; 10:13, 20; 11:12; 12:8; 15:14, 28; 16:1, 9; 16:23; 18:15; 20:5; 25:3), and a center for relationship with Yahweh and the object of His attention: (3:5; 15:11; 17:3; 19:3; 21:2); these are its principal functions.

In addition to the לֵב numerous other essential components of the body are mentioned. Two words for man's organic substance--flesh--

⁵Pedersen, *op. cit.*, I, 171.

⁶In all, לֵב occurs ninety-eight times in Proverbs.

are used; רֶשֶׁת originally meant the flesh next to the skin, but the meaning became generalized (4:22; 14:30).⁷ Correspondingly, רֶשֶׁתֶּיךָ meant the inner flesh next to the bones. The former is used in 5:11 in parallel with the latter. Also רֶשֶׁתֶּיךָ is used parallel to רֶשֶׁתֶּיךָ (11:17) but never as an opposite, which is significant. Once רֶשֶׁת , navel, occurs as a metonymy for man's mid-section which reacts to emotion and digests his food (3:8). Trusting in Yahweh and good news alike are said to refresh the bones (3:8; 15:30), but shame, agitation, and discouragement rot and dry out the bones (12:4; 14:30; 17:22). Man's blood is mentioned (30:33), but usually it is used in a figurative expression for assault or murder (1:11, 16, 18; 6:17; 12:6) or guilt for same (28:17), and by inference from 20:30 it is bleeding that cleanses a wound and keeps it from getting worse.

Several words for man's viscera merit attention. Meaning "belly," that is, inner bodily organs, or "womb" in connection with the female (31:2), רֶשֶׁת can signify merely the organs of physical appetite (13:25), or it can stand symbolically for the psychological nature of man as something deep within him that is pleasantly affected by "the fruit of his mouth" (18:20) and living in wisdom (22:18). Four times the compound $\text{רֶשֶׁתֶּיךָ רֶשֶׁתֶּיךָ}$, "innermost parts" or "inner parts of the body" (18:8; 20:27, 30; 26:22) is to be found. All but one of these (20:30) has

⁷In 23:20 it signifies animal meat.

to do with man's psychological rather than physical interior. The kidneys, כִּלְיֵי יוֹת, ⁸ being organs deep within the torso, serve a similar function; they are said to "rejoice" (23:16). The regular word for "womb," רֶחֶם, is found once (30:16) with that meaning.

Bodily parts figure large in Proverbs. They become easy vehicles for "soulful" expressions, e.g., "the bountiful eye" (22:9); "He who . . . stiffens his neck" (29:1); "a slack hand" (10:4); "feet that make haste to run to evil" (6:18); "the mouths of fools feed on folly" (15:14); "the smooth tongue of the adventuress" (6:24); "the lips of knowledge" (20:15), and many similar expressions. For instance, five of the seven things the LORD is said to hate are identified in connection with parts of the body qualified in some manner: eyes, tongue, hands, heart, feet (6:16-19). Even more impressive is the twelvefold sequence found in 4:20-27: ear, eyes, heart (לֵב), flesh (בָּשָׂר), heart (לֵב), mouth, lips, eyes, eyelids, feet, right hand, left hand.⁹ A wicked worthless person is vividly portrayed in terms of the use of his body (6:12-14). He goes about with a crooked mouth (speaking out of the corner of it?), winks with his eyes, taps with his feet, points with his finger. A fifth factor is added in a similar proverb (16:30); he compresses

⁸The RSV takes kidneys here as a figure for "soul."

⁹This list is based on the literal rendering of the Hebrew text, which otherwise would not be so evident in the English.

his lips (as if to silence someone).

The tabulation that follows represents all the parts of the human body mentioned in Proverbs with the number of times each is mentioned according to the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated: head (6); hair (1); eye (5), eyes (34), eyelids and eyelashes (3); nose (1); ears (12); mouth (37), lips (34), tongue (19); tooth (1), teeth (3); throat (1), neck (5); arms (1), hand, in general but not anthropomorphically (13), hands (12), right hand (2), left hand (1); flesh (4); inner or innermost parts (4); heart (98, Hebrew count); bosom, general (3), female bosom (1) and breast (1--Hebrew), back (3), kidneys (1--Hebrew); loins (1); male sex organ, "fountain" (1); lap (1, but really it is the word for "bosom"); legs (1); foot (6), feet (10). In nearly all of these references to parts of the body the Israelite sees the soul manifesting itself in the body.

The Vitality of Man

Biological Drives

One manifestation of man's vital force is the presence of his biological drives. A drive has been defined as "any internal stimulus which impels the organism to activity, often, but not necessarily to goal-seeking behavior."¹⁰ Biological drives originate from the

¹⁰Floyd L. Ruch, Psychology and Life (Fifth edition; Chicago:

undeniable tissue needs of man's body. The biological drives that are recognized today include: needs for food, water, oxygen, rest, sleep, warmth when cold, coolness when hot; needs to relieve the sex drive, pain, and bowel and bladder tensions.¹¹ Man as portrayed in the ancient proverbs of Israel possessed these same tissue drives in his organism as demonstrated in the analysis that follows:

1. hunger or appetite: 6:30; 10:3; 13:25; 16:26; 19:15; 23:1-8; 24:13; 25:16, 21, 27; 18 and 30:8--"feed me with the food that is needful for me." This drive easily becomes a figure for: (1) the pursuit of folly--1:31; 4:17; 18:21; (2) or of wisdom--9:5; 18:21.

2. thirst: 25:21, 25.

3. air: breath, 20:27 (Hebrew). Because a man's breath goes deep within him, it is functioning here as a metaphor for the spirit of man.

4. rest and sleep: "when you lie down your sleep will be sweet" (if you have been keeping sound wisdom and discretion, 3:21-24). All the other references to sleep relate in a negative sense. The sluggard is pre-eminently a man of sleep--6:9, 10; 19:15; 20:13; 23:21; 24:33.

Two reasons why men do not sleep are given: (1) there are those who are restless until they do evil (4:16) and (2) there are those whom the

Scott, Foresman and Co., 1958), p. 594.

¹¹Ibid., p. 125.

wise man counsels not to sleep until they have freed themselves from their pledged surety for another (6:1-5).

5. maintenance of even bodily temperature: 25:20--"A garment on a cold day"; 25:25--"cold water to a thirsty soul."

6. the sex drive: 2:16; 5:1-20; 6:24-35; 7:10-23; 9:13-18; 22:14; 23:27, 28; 29:3; 30:20.

7. relief of pain and bowel and bladder tensions: "a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard" (26:9), with the insensibility to pain while in a drunken stupor (23:29-35). A prudent man foresees danger and hides himself but others do not and therefore they suffer (22:3; 27:12). The characteristic operation of bladder sphincters is cited in 17:14 as a simile for the continuation of strife once it has begun.

Health, Vigor, and Longevity

"A cheerful heart (לֵב שִׂמְחָה) is a good medicine" (17:22) and "the tongue of the wise" and "a faithful envoy" alike bring "healing" (12:18; 13:17), which is to say that a man's psychological state has a profound influence upon his organism. On the negative side "a down-cast spirit dries up the bones" (17:22). Words influence both a man's moods and his health:

Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to the body (16:24).

Health for some makes the difference in their disposition:

All the days of the afflicted are bad,
but good health (בְּיָסוּרִים) produces a continual feast (15:15).¹²

Furthermore, health is conditioned upon man's spiritual condition.

Trust, acknowledgment, and humble fear of the LORD while walking in wisdom is said to do this:

It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones (3:8).

For they are life to him who finds them
and healing to all his flesh (4:22).

A man who is kind benefits himself,
but a cruel man hurts himself (11:17).

The vigor of a man is represented by these three words: קִיּוֹן -- strength, power, as the glory of young men (20:29); as something that can be lost to strangers through immorality (5:10); as being small if you faint in the day of adversity (24:10), and when merely physical, it is not to be valued as high as wisdom and knowledge (24:5); גִּבּוֹר -- strength, might, which the rich man finds in his wealth (10:15; 18:11), but the righteous finds in the name and fear of Yahweh (18:10; 14:26), and which is especially to be found in a brother helped (18:19), and in the ideal wife (31:17, 25); and עֲזָרָה strength, efficiency, wealth,

¹²Translation by author of this thesis; the RSV translates the Hebrew as "cheerful heart," which was also their translation for 17:22 supra, having a different Hebrew rendering. Since "welfare of heart" (literal rendering) is a prime requisite for good health, it has been taken by this writer as a metonymy for good health, which also makes a sharper antithetical parallelism.

army. In the sense of the first two meanings, it is used of the ideal wife as אִשָּׁת חַיִּיל, a wife of strength (12:4; 31:10; cf. 31:29), and the king is not to spend his vigor upon women (31:3).

Longevity is linked with righteousness (16:31; 28:16), and the fear of the LORD which "prolongs life" (10:27), both of which are synonymous for following the way of wisdom, which is the only way known in the canonical proverbs for obtaining long life (3:2, 16; 4:10; 9:11). Particularly noticeable is the absence of any nostrums for longevity conceived in superstition. The achievement of longevity is wholly predicated upon following the wisdom of righteousness. The beauty of old men is their gray hair (20:29) and grandchildren are their crown (17:6).

Man's Moral Condition

Serving as an index to the proverbial viewpoint relative to the moral state of man is this tendentious proverb:

Who can say, "I have made my heart clean;
I am pure from my sin"? (20:9).

The implication of this rhetorical question, of course, is that nobody can make this claim (cf. 28:13). Without striving for righteousness, man just naturally sins; he hears instruction but then he strays from it all too easily (19:27) because of this proclivity for sin. It is expected then that any parent who loves his child will be faithful to discipline him (13:24) in recognition of the bent to do evil that inheres in all

children. There is no reasoning back to Adam as the original causative factor in man's sinfulness. Rather, it is considered self-evident that man is a sinner and in need of the correction of discipline and the instruction of wisdom, though all his ways are pure in his own eyes (16:2; 30:12). Indeed:

Many a man proclaims his own loyalty
but a faithful man who can find (20:6)?

Thus as to moral starting point all men are observed to be inadequate. Man's native simplicity is not to be equated with innocence, "For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them" (1:32). There is a functional view of man expressed in Proverbs in which mankind is divided into two camps of the wise and fools, saints and sinners, on the basis of "the way" they follow.

The Ideal Woman

Most of the proverbs are addressed to male auditors as indicated by the interspersed vocatives (my son(s)--1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1, 7, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1, 24; 8:32; 19:27; 23:15, 19, 26; 24:13, 21; 27:11; 31:2), and from the point of view that assumes a male addressee (e.g., 5:18; 6:23-35; 18:22; 31:10). However, though this view of the world through a man's eyes predominates and even may be total, there nevertheless is a considerable amount of attention given to the subject

of mankind in the female gender. An אִשָּׁה is a "woman" or "wife," since adult women were usually married; so the context must determine which rendering is more appropriate, and in some few cases the meaning will remain ambiguous.

The qualities that mark the ideal woman are definitely moral. "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain" (31:30). "Like a gold ring in a swine's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion" (11:22). She is the gracious woman אִשָּׁה יְרֵאָה (11:16), the woman who fears the LORD (19:14). One of her chief characteristics that makes her "the crown of her husband" (12:4) is her deliberate efficiency as a אִשָּׁה עֹמֵלָה (12:4; 31:10). This is the theme of the acrostic poem patterned according to the Hebrew alphabetic sequence that ends the proverbial collections (31:10-31).¹³ According to the poem she is rated at the highest value (10), trustworthy (11), beneficent to her husband (12), industrious (13,14), an early riser (15), a gardener (16), physically strong (17), foresighted (18), energetic (19), charitable (20), a dressmaker and tailor (21-23), a manufacturer (24), ready for whatever the future may bring (25), wise and kind (26), economical (27), blessed and praised by her children, husband, and "in the gate" (i. e., town council) (28-31), and is above all a godly woman (31:30).

¹³Robert H. Pfeiffer calls it "the best acrostic alphabetic poem in the Old Testament," Introduction to the Old Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941), p. 649.

The ideal wife may also be described in terms of what she is not. A foolish wife is noisy, wanton, and shameless (9:13), bringing shame on her husband (12:4), contentious (21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15) and uncontrollable (27:16). She may also be an adulteress (6:26, 29), but none of these characteristics will be found in the ideal wife whose value is "far more precious than jewels" (31:10).

Sex Relations

Sex is more than a biological drive. It involves to a greater or lesser degree all the relations of man and woman. One of the mysteries of life "too wonderful" for Agur, one which he did not "understand" was "the way of a man with a maiden" (30:19). Sex relations evince the dynamic quality of human life. Not a little instruction is given in the proverbs, therefore, relating to the right and wrong ways of directing this power.

The positive teaching pertaining to the propriety of sex expression is to be seen in the following extended proverb couched in symbolic euphemism:

Drink water from your own cistern,
 flowing water from your own well.
 Should your springs be scattered abroad,
 streams of water in the streets?
 Let them be for yourself alone,
 and not for strangers with you.
 Let your fountain be blessed,
 and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
 a lovely hind, a graceful doe.

Let her affection fill you at all times with delight,
be infatuated always with her love.

Why should you be infatuated, my son, with a loose woman
and embrace the bosom of an adventuress?

For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD,
and he watches all his paths. (5:15-21)

Certain summary generalizations can be drawn from this passage:

- (1) Sex per se is not wrong but is a part of God's plan; (2) Sex expression should be confined at all times within the limits of marriage;
- (3) Mutual delight is a legitimate and natural feature of sex expression between a husband and his wife in their times of intimacy; (4) God takes note of anyone who departs from his wife for another woman, (and such a one "dies for lack of discipline"--5:23).

In the many warnings and admonitions against adultery it is remarkable that the woman is always presented as the seducer. This may be due in part to the masculine slant already discussed, but more probably it reflects the double-standard mores¹⁴ of the first millennium B.C. The women seducers may be gathered into two groups: (1) the harlots זְנוּנִים (29:3) and (2) the adulteresses (6:26, 29). A woman bent upon immorality is given several appellations.¹⁵ She is called most often the אֲשֵׁרָה זָרָה, a strange, foreign or alien woman (2:16; 5:3, 20; 7:5; 22:14), which could conceivably apply to either the harlot

¹⁴Oscar E. Feucht, et al., Sex and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 21.

¹⁵Supra, p. 56.

or adulteress, and likewise for the הַגֵּרָאָה --foreign woman (6:24--parallel to אִשׁ שָׂדֵיךָ , evil woman; 23:7--parallel to הַזֵּבֻל --harlot). Yet the foreign or evil¹⁶ woman of 6:24 above is none other than a neighbor's wife (6:29) whose husband will be enraged (6:34). Set in this context (6:24-34), the following proverb seems to condone harlotry while ardently inveighing against adultery with a married woman:

Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;
for a harlot may be hired for a loaf of bread,
but an adulteress stalks a man's very life (6:25, 26).

The question to be resolved is this: Is the latter parallelism antithetical or synonymous? The Septuagint takes it as a weak antithesis with the addition of $\tau\iota\mu\eta$ (price). The Revised Standard Version obviously takes it antithetically also. Delitzsch, on the other hand, construes it to be synonymous of the double threat of loss to be sustained by one yielding to either, translating it thus:¹⁷

Because for a harlot one cometh down to a piece of bread
and a man's wife lieth in wait for a precious soul (6:26).

The evidence on neither side is sufficiently decisive. It could be that

¹⁶The Septuagint has ἡ πανδρος --"married woman" here just as in 6:29.

¹⁷Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon, translated by M. G. Easton (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950), I, 151-152.

the long passage consisting of chapter five, whose female culprit is the $\overline{\text{נ}}\overline{\text{נ}}\overline{\text{ו}}$, without allusion of any kind to a husband, has to do with the evils of the harlot (though $\overline{\text{נ}}\overline{\text{ו}}\overline{\text{ו}}$ is not used there); whereas, 6:24-35 complements the treatment by tracing the folly of sexual intercourse with a married woman not your wife. Inspection of the other long passages reveals the following information. In 7:10-23 it is a married woman who dresses as a harlot though she admits she has a husband, who is to be resisted. The situation in 9:13-18 is less explicit, but by implication from "stolen water"¹⁸ a third party is defrauded, although it could just as well be the man's wife.

Getting back to 6:26, taking it according to one interpretation, it is but a concession that going in to a harlot is better than to a married woman. This would place it in a category of tolerance that extended as far as polygamy. A leading Roman Catholic theology of the Old Testament, though not commenting on this specific proverb, holds this view relative to the matter:

Since polygamy was permitted in the Old Testament, a married man committed adultery by having relations with a married woman, but not with an unmarried woman; on the other hand intercourse between a married woman and a married or unmarried man was adultery.¹⁹

¹⁸This is the third reference in Proverbs to water as a symbol of sexual intercourse, the other two being 5:15 (2); cf. also 5:16.

¹⁹Paul Heinisch, Theology of the Old Testament, translated by William G. Heidt (Collegeville, Minn.: The Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1955), p. 203.

Taking 6:26 in a non-concessive sense, however, it accords with every other proverb on the subject in all the collections and constitutes a united front of counsel against sexual promiscuity of any kind outside the bounds of marriage. Whichever view is adopted on this verse, the seriousness of the misuse of one's vital power by sexual aberration is apparent again and again through the book.²⁰

Child and Youth Training

The golden text for child training in Israel and the Church over the centuries has been this proverb:

Train up a child in the way that he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from it (22:6).

In keeping with the realistic view of man as a sinner, it is noted that "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child" (22:15), and is expressed through his actions (20:11).

A wise man taught by his father teaches his sons in turn the commandments of wisdom (4:1-4). Not a little of this instruction (1:8) must be by way of discipline (23:13); this discipline must come early in the child's life while there is hope of making an impression on him (19:18), for "a child left to himself brings shame to his mother" (29:15). The "rod of discipline" is encouraged (22:15). "He who spares the rod hates

²⁰For a complete list of passages, cf., supra, p. 78.

his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him" (13:24).

Such an ideal father who reproveth the son in whom he delights exemplifies the way Yahweh corrects him whom He loves (3:12).

This training through discipline and instruction is the responsibility of father (4:4; 23:22; 30:17) and mother (29:15; 30:17; 31:1).

"The rod and reproof give wisdom" (29:15); it is this combination of punishment plus the interpretative word--the reproof--that gets the job done. The rod alone without the corrective word is reserved only for the back of fools who will not listen (10:13; 14:3; 26:3). Therefore:

Discipline your son, and he will give you rest;
he will give delight to your heart (29:17).

Man's Social Relations

In view of the practical perspective of the prudential literature, one is not surprised to find considerable attention given to man's social relations. Concrete principles are forged relative to a multiplicity of human relationships.

General Interpersonal Relations

The "Golden Rule" is nowhere stated explicitly, yet by addition of the numerous negatives that forbid its opposite it can be seen that it is latent in Proverbs, only needing the Master Teacher of the New Testament to give it formal expression. These passages illustrate this:

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due
 when it is within your power to do it.
 Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again,
 tomorrow I will give it"--when you have it with you.
 Do not plan evil against your neighbor
 who dwells trustingly beside you.
 Do not contend with a man for no reason,
 when he has done you no harm (3:27-30).

Do not say, "I will do to him as he has done to me;
 I will pay the man back for what he has done" (24:29).

Similar, but not identical with the "Golden Rule" is what might be
 termed the "Silver Rule"--which brings judgment on the enemy and re-
 ward from Yahweh for kindness shown to one's enemy.

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
 and if he is thirsty give him water to drink;
 for you will heap coals of fire on his head,
 and the LORD will reward you (25:21, 22).

The following counsel of wisdom from an Akkadian source dating before
 700 B. C. shows some degree of similarity with this biblical proverb:

Unto your opponent do no evil;
 Your evildoer recompense with good;
 Unto your enemy let justice be done.
 Unto your oppressor . . .
 Let him rejoice over you, . . . return to him.
 Let not your heart be induced to do evil.
 (some lines lost)

Give food to eat, give date wine to drink;
 The one begging for alms honor, clothe:
 Over this his god rejoices,
 This is pleasing to the god Shamash, he rewards it with good.
 Be helpful, do good (lines 35-40 - ii 12-16).²¹

²¹Ancient Near Eastern Texts, edited by James B. Pritchard
 (second edition; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 426.

If the last five lines have shifted to charity toward the poor as they seem to have done, then the likeness is even less, and hardly substantial enough to be indicative of borrowing in either direction.

Co-ordinate with feeding one's enemy in order to "heap coals of fire on his head" (25:21, 22), is the counsel not to rejoice when evil befalls one's enemy "lest the LORD see it, and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him" (24:17, 18). In the former case it seems to be beneficence without benevolence for a specific purpose, while in the latter it is a proscription of expressed malevolence without requiring a true benevolence ("lest the LORD . . . turn away his anger from him"). Too much, however, should not be concluded from these two proverbs, which as in all spicy language requires an occasional startling statement for effect. They both counsel the soft approach toward one's enemy. It is a well-known fact that:

Hatred stirs up strife,
but love covers all offenses (10:12).

In fact in both cases of relation with one's enemy there is a triangular factor that enters in. Yahweh enters the situation to reward and punish and the wise man will always take this into account. What is more:

When a man's ways please the LORD,
he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (16:7).

The following forms of behavior with one's fellowman are discouraged as lacking conformity with the way of wisdom:

1. Unfounded criticism. "He who belittles his neighbor lacks sense,

but a man of understanding remains silent" (11:12). One is warned not to witness against him "without cause" (24:28); such false witness is "like a war club, or a sword or a sharp arrow" (25:18). If one hastily accuses his neighbor without good evidence, he is very likely to reap shame himself (25:7b, 8).

2. Unsympathetic treatment of the poor.

By the hoarding merchant seeking a higher price:

The people curse him who holds back grain
but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it (11:26).

By the ordinary citizen:

He who despises his neighbor is a sinner,
but happy is he who is kind to the poor (14:21).

3. Unforgiveness. It is the glory of a man to overlook an offense (19:11). "He who forgives an offense seeks loves, but he who repeats a matter alienates a friend" (17:9). No mercy can be expected from the wicked (21:10).

4. Overfamiliarity. Too many visits to one's neighbor's house will weary him of you (25:17). Deceptive treatment of a fellowman that is brushed off with "I'm only joking" is likewise insufferable. To get on the good side of him, on the contrary, by flattery is to invite trouble (29:5), for "He who blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, will be counted as cursing" (27:14).

Friendship

A true friend, like a member of one's own family, "loves at all times," especially in times of adversity (17:17). Formal or family connections, however, are not always indicative of genuine fidelity:

There are friends who pretend to be friends,
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (18:24).

One's pecuniary state proportionately affects the quantity of his professed friends:

The poor is disliked even by his neighbor,
but the rich has many friends (14:20).

Wealth brings many new friends,
but a poor man is deserted by his friend (19:4).

Many seek the favor of a generous man,
and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts,
All a poor man's brothers hate him;
how much more do his friends go far from him (19:6, 7).

It's easy to see that friends must be evaluated in terms of quality rather than quantity. True friendship, that is, qualitative friendship, has its foundation firmly fixed in spiritual rather than material values.

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (27:17). One of the most profound of these proverbs is a paradox:

Faithful are the wounds of a friend;
profuse are the kisses of an enemy (27:6).

The "wounds of a friend," his gentle rebuffs geared to edification, cement friendship, but "he who repeats a matter" outside the friendship spreads strife and alienates a friend (16:28; 17:9).

Friendship is dissuaded only in reference to one whose bad habits would be learned through their association (1:10-14; 22:24). Finally, true friends are to be cherished: "Your friend, and your father's friend, do not forsake" (27:10).

Surety

One of the most striking features of the Hebrew proverbs to twentieth-century man is the stringent strictures placed on giving oneself as surety for another.²² The suretyship here described means the pledging of a man's own credit to enable his friend to procure a loan.²³ Surety was personal in contradistinction to a material or objective pledge.²⁴ Proverbs has more on suretyship than all the rest of the Old Testament together, and it consistently strikes a negative note relative to participation in it:

Be not one of those who give pledges,
 who become surety for debts.
 If you have nothing with which to pay,
 why should your bed be taken from under you (22:26, 27)?

²²Performance bonds, co-signing notes, and going bail are the most common forms of surety in twentieth-century society.

²³J. W. Nutt, "Proverbs," Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible, edited by Charles John Ellicott (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954 reprint), p. 313.

²⁴G. A. Barrois, "Surety," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick, et al., (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV, 466.

A man without sense gives a pledge,
and becomes surety in the presence of his neighbor (17:18).

He who gives surety for a stranger will smart for it,
but he who hates suretyship is secure (11:15).

The last line could well be taken as the theme of the proverbial wisdom on the subject. Furthermore there is a proverb repeated in collections

II and IV that advises taking a man's garment as pledge and in some-
what of a paronomasia it commands holding the man himself as a

"pledge" when he has become surety for strangers or foreigners

(20:16; 27:13). The longest passage on the subject (6:1-5) likens a man

so involved to a bird trapped by a hunter, snared by his own words.

He is counselled to do all in his power immediately to importune his

neighbor and to free himself from this detrimental contractual obliga-

tion.

Barrois accounts for the Proverbial failure to countenance surety-
ship in these words:

Failure to pay or to appear personally would have resulted in the surety's being compelled to assume the debt, or being deprived of his personal freedom and being reduced to the condition of a slave. Hence the Proverbs advise men against giving themselves a surety for others, especially for strangers, which indeed was most risky.²⁵

It is noteworthy that later in the first millennium B. C. one who goes surety for another is commended for his goodness by Ben Sira:

²⁵Ibid.

A good man will go surety for his neighbor,
 But the man who has lost his sense of shame will abandon him.
 Do not forget the favor your surety has done you,
 For he has put himself in your place.
 A sinner will disregard the service done him by his surety,
 And so ungrateful man will forsake the man who saved him
 (Sir. 29:14-17).

Slavery

Slavery is part of the social phenomena of the Old Testament world and therefore emerges in these proverbs (12:9; 14:35; 17:2; 19:10; 27:27; 29:19, 21; 30:10, 22). A slave was expected to keep his place in society (19:10). If he conducted himself wisely he would rule over a son who acted shamefully and ultimately share in the inheritance on a par with the sons (17:2; cf. 29:21). Yet "it is not fitting" for a slave to rule over princes (19:10) or even worse, for him to become king was one of the things that shook the earth (30:21); and for a maid to succeed her mistress would produce the same effect (30:23). Yet the very threat of these possibilities indicates that a slave or servant²⁶ was not entirely hopeless of advancement; if he behaved wisely, he would incur the king's favor, no less (14:35), and if shamefully the king's anger. This could well have originated as a special proverb for the king's slaves.

For an obtuse slave more than words were needed to discipline

²⁶ תַּבְּיָו is behind both English translations, "slave" and "servant" in Proverbs.

him (29:19); moreover, merely accusing him before his master is unwise, since his master might believe the slave's word over the accuser's (30:10).

Committing folly with a strange woman is spoken of in terms that imply the possibility of slavery as a consequence (5:9-12); whether actual or figurative, it is difficult to determine.

The "white-trash" type of man who had a slave²⁷ was thought to be better off than he who pretended to be great but lacked bread (12:9). For many, a servant was an economic necessity whether in agriculture or business.

Twice עֶבֶד is used figuratively: "The fool will be servant to the wise" (11:29), and "the borrower is the slave of the lender" (22:7).

The Mutual Relations of Man With the King

In our day a man's relations with his government partakes of a much more impersonal character than in ancient Israel. Then the king was the top executive, law-maker and chief justice of the highest court of appeals; and in a small country such as this few important men escaped the knowledge of the king, and many ordinary citizens gained his attention.

²⁷This interpretation follows the Masoretic pointing, עֶבֶד; cf. Delitzsch, op. cit., I, 254-255.

There are twenty-eight references to "king(s)" in nearly as many proverbs, one figurative use of king (30:27), and three references to men as "king": Solomon (1:1); Hezekiah (25:1); and the King of Massa, Lemuel (31:1). Not a little attention is paid to the king as is apparent simply from the sheer number of references made to him. Princes and rulers also figure in the wisdom of Proverbs.

The following directives are given to him who is subject to the king as guidelines for governing his relationship to the king:

1. Respect and obey him (24:21; 16:10; 21:1; 25:3).
2. Appease his anger (16:14; 14:35; 19:12; 20:2).
3. Speak only the truth with him (16:13; 22:11).
4. Seek his favor by your skillful work (22:29; 16:15).
5. Maintain humility before him (25:6, 7).
6. Be loyal and faithful to him (20:28).
7. Do not overeat of his delicacies (23:3).

In return one can expect from the king:

1. An administration carried on by wisdom (8:15; 25:2; 28:2).
2. Righteousness as his standard (16:12; 25:5).
3. Justice and equity for all his people (20:8, 26; 28:16; 29:4, 14).

Individual Responsibility

Moral changes in a group are effected to the degree that individuals in that group experience moral growth and development. This is the

perspective permeating Proverbs. A number of facts support this conclusion. Instructions are consistently directed to the individual, as opposed to a group-complex approach in which every member would be counseled as to his part to play in a joint endeavor. When direct address is made to the younger generation as was customary in contemporary sapiential guidance, the predominant reference is to the individual, "my son," occurring twenty-four times, while the plural form "sons" is found but five times in direct address, yet what follows clearly indicates that they are still regarded as individual moral agents.

Perhaps the most patent proverb along this line is that which comes as the conclusion of the chapter-and-a-half "call" of personified Wisdom:

If you are wise, you are wise for yourself;
if you scoff, you alone will bear it (9:12).

The Septuagint changes the idea of the first line to one that stresses more corporate involvement:

Son, if you become wise to your own advantage,
you shall also be wise to the advantage of your neighbors.
But if you turn out bad, you alone shall derive evil.²⁸

In other words, according to the Septuagint, if one turns out wise, everybody benefits, but if not, only he suffers for it. Whether this much of the Septuagint represents a fuller Hebrew text is uncertain.

²⁸The thesis writer's translation of the text which reads:

υιέ, εάν σοφός γένη σεαυτῶ, σοφός ἔση καὶ τοῖς πλησίον.
εάν δε κακός ἀποβῆς, μόνος ἀναντλήσεις κακά.

It also adds six or seven more lines to the verse somewhat anti-climatically, which, incidentally have no bearing on the idea of individuality. In any case all that is added in the part that parallels the Hebrew text is the stated effect of the individual on the group not unique in Proverbs (cf. 29:2, 12).

Occasionally the corporate image is employed: "When a land transgresses it has many rulers" (28:2; also 14:34). Much more common, however, is the proverb that concerns the single individual and his personal responsibility. "He who ignores instruction despises himself" (15:32) is a proverb typical of many more that focus directly on the individual. Like Moses before he was accepted by the Israelites one should not presume upon a universal appreciation of corporeity:

He who meddles in a quarrel not his own
is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears (26:17).

The only real point of controversy is not whether Proverbs inculcates individual or corporate responsibility, but whether "the characteristic individualism of Proverbs"²⁹ necessitates a post-exilic date for its composition. Representative of this evolutionary view is S. H. Blank who says in comment on the book of Proverbs: "This complete and unquestioning acceptance of the doctrine of retribution on the individual level means that the contest of Ezekiel 18 was among the

²⁹Edgar Jones, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes Introduction and Commentary (London: SCM Press, 1961), p. 106.

'battles long ago.'³⁰ The resolution of the problem of dating these proverbs is not within the purview of this thesis,³¹ but caution must always be exercised in such matters, that one begin with historical, grammatical data and weigh the theological implications in light of these, rather than determining the isagogics by a precise theological slide rule and timetable.

The Blessed Man

"A good man obtains favor from the LORD" (12:2), finding "favor and good repute in the sight of God and man" (3:4). Such a God-fearing man (16:20) is characterized in the following ways as: (1) a man of wisdom (8:34, 35); (2) of integrity (14:9); (3) of humility (3:34); (4) a generous man (22:9); (5) a faithful man (28:20); (6) a married man (18:22); and as (7) an honorable man, having "a good name" (22:1). "The blessing of the LORD" has made him "rich" in the truest sense (10:22).³² How this blessed state is obtained by sinful man remains to be investigated in the chapter that follows.

³⁰S. H. Blank, "Wisdom," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV, 857.

³¹Supra, p. 2.

³²Cf. exegesis of the rest of the verse, supra, p. 47.

CHAPTER V

PROVERBIAL SOTERIOLOGY

Manifestly the perspective of the wisdom literature on soteriology will differ from the Old Testament histories of the God who acts, from the cultus of the temple liturgy, from the burning oracles of God speaking through the prophets. Yet the difference is entirely one of perspective, viewpoint, and approach, for the plan of God's salvation remains the same, though covenants are superseded by better ones. The base remains unalterable that salvation is by and in God alone.

Distinguishing LAW and GOSPEL in Proverbs

A fine specimen of the combination of LAW¹ and GOSPEL in a single proverb is this one:

Do not say, "I will repay evil";
wait for the LORD and he will help (יְשׁוּעָה) you (20:22).

As intensely practical as the proverbs are, one can see here a condemnation of man's urge to retaliate, and correspondingly the assurance that in this given incident his "salvation," temporal though it be, is directly contingent, not upon his works, but upon the gracious

¹LAW as used here is taken in the broad sense of God's word that condemns man in all his own righteousness and sin, as consistently found in the Lutheran theologies.

disposition of Yahweh to reach him in his need.

The condemnation of the LAW hangs heavy over man and rests upon the very core of his being:

Who can say, "I have made my heart (כִּלְיָי) clean;
I am pure from my sin"? (20:9)

He who trusts in his own mind (כִּלְיָי) is a fool
but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered (28:26).

While salvation arising from within oneself is ardently disclaimed, there is a strong hint of GOSPEL in the numinous passive that comprises the latter part of the last line--"he . . . will be delivered" (יִדְּרָא). That is, God in His grace will "deliver" him because he has that wisdom that knows and fears God. The following two proverbs parallel this idea of God's deliverance, by implication in the numinous passives:

(GOSPEL) He who walks in integrity will be delivered (יִדְּרָא),
(LAW) but he who is perverse in his ways will fall into a pit (28:18).

(LAW) Be assured, an evil man will not go unpunished,
(GOSPEL) but those who are righteous will be delivered (יִדְּרָא)--11:21).

In the one case the "salvation" is deliverance from the pit, in the other, from punishment. It is very much a "this-worldly" salvation. Likewise the fatherless are said to have a "Redeemer."

(LAW) Do not remove an ancient landmark
(LAW) or enter the field of the fatherless;
(GOSPEL) for their Redeemer is strong;²
(LAW) he will plead their cause against you (23:10, 11).

²It is reasonably certain that לִנְסֹא here refers to God as the

Using the apparent means as a metonymy for the ultimate cause it can also be said:

(GOSPEL) by knowledge the righteous are delivered (11:9).

(LAW) Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit
(GOSPEL) but righteousness delivers from death (10:2).

(LAW) Riches do not profit in the day of wrath
(GOSPEL) but righteousness delivers from death (11:4).

(GOSPEL) The righteousness of the upright delivers them³
(LAW) but the treacherous are taken captive by their lust (11:6).

Salvation by Faith

The conscious continuous attitude of faith in God in all the practical situations of life may well be the most outstanding soteriological contribution of Proverbs. The following anthology of "faith" proverbs reveals how frequent and foundational faith is for the wise man:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths (3:5, 6).

Do not be afraid of sudden panic,
or the ruin of the wicked when it comes;
for the LORD will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being caught (3:25, 26).

strong defender of the fatherless, even if he be thought of as acting through a human agent.

³This cannot be construed to be self-righteousness attained apart from the gift of God's wisdom in the light of 20:6, 9.

In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence,
and his children will have a refuge (14:26).

He who gives heed to the word will prosper,
and happy is he who trusts in the LORD (16:20).

That your trust may be in the LORD,
I have made them [words of the wise] known to you today (22:19).

A greedy man stirs up strife,
but he who trusts in the LORD is safe (28:25).

The fear of man [i. e., man's anxiety $\square \square \square \square$] lays a snare,
but he who trusts in the LORD is safe (29:25).

Every word of God proves true;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him (30:5).

Summarizing, it is found that faith in Yahweh has these results:

1. One's "way" is straightened out; he is saved from himself (3:5, 6).
2. One is kept secure (3:25, 26; 29:25; 30:5).
3. One is blessed and enriched (16:20; 28:25).

Three prominent unworthy objects of man's faith are censured:

1. Exclusive faith in oneself--"He who trusts in his own mind is a fool" (28:26).
2. All-absorbing confidence in wealth--"He who trusts in riches will wither" (Hebrew: fall) (11:28).
3. Confidence in unreliable man--"Trust in a faithless man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips" (25:19).

Confident trust in Yahweh is advanced as the only way to truly live (that is, have "salvation"). It was more of a faith for living than a faith for dying. That is, the thoughts of "otherworldliness," (11:31),

preparations of man to meet God, and the state of the righteous after death are very nebulous concepts in Proverbs. It is axiomatic that the wicked's hope is geared exclusively to the here and now: "When the wicked dies, his hope perishes, and the expectation of the godless comes to naught" (11:7). But what kind of faith can the righteous have?

Let not your heart envy sinners,
but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.
Surely there is a future (וַיִּיָּדָע) וְלֹא יִכָּרֵץ
and your hope will not be cut off (23:17,18).

Know that wisdom is such to your soul;
if you find it, there will be a future,
and your hope will not be cut off (24:14).

What does this add up to? Hope! Faith operating in the soul who feared Yahweh left its heritage of saving hope for the future--hope ever so unspecific, yet genuine, that someday, somehow the trusting soul in life would not be forever disappointed in death: confidence that there is a difference between the death of the wicked and that of the righteous, between that of the fool and that of him who "fears the LORD." So while it can be said that faith is an integral part of the wise man's way of life, and a factor presupposed in the "fear of the LORD," "a fountain of life that one may avoid the snares of death" (14:27), such faith partakes of a sound soteriological stability, whatever may be the inadequacies of its eschatological indeterminateness.

Soteriological Evidences of Faith

What are the norms of the religious expression of faith of which

the wisdom of Proverbs gives evidence?

Repentance

He who conceals his transgression will not prosper,
but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy (28:13).

Hardly a more direct and incisive word on repentance can be found anywhere in the Bible. LAW and GOSPEL stand side by side in this proverb.

Renewal

By loyalty and faithfulness (יְדוּשָׁן וְיִרְאָה) iniquity is atoned for,
and by the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil (16:6).

This proverb concerns the practical transformation of a man's life consequent upon God's grace that forgives him. In his new spiritual state as a forgiven man partaking of God's grace he is to demonstrate his renewal by fearing God. This means that he departs from evil and lives a different life, characterized by ethical integrity. For: "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice" (21:3). Twice it is stated that sacrifice without renewal is an "abomination to the LORD" (15:8; 21:27; even the "loose woman" may have her "sacrifices"--7:14).

Worship

Though sacrifices are not solicited in Proverbs in view of their

abuse, the principle of giving is nonetheless commended as a form of worship:

Honor the LORD with your substance
and with the first fruits of all your produce;
then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine (3:9,10).

Now the following proverb is best understood as a commentary on the one just given:

One man gives freely, yet grows all the richer;
another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want (11:24).

Stated another way:

A liberal man will be enriched,
and one who waters will himself be watered (11:25).

Finally, in addition to "honoring the LORD" with one's finances the renewed man enjoys the privilege of prayer:

The LORD is far from the wicked
but he hears the prayer of the righteous (15:29).

the prayer of the upright is his delight (15:8).

But if one turns away from wisdom and instruction even his prayer, like the sacrifices, turns into an "abomination" (28:9).

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

This thesis intersects Biblical and Systematic Theology. From the findings of exegesis of the Book of Proverbs a systematization of its theology has been constructed. A collection of at least five wisdom anthologies and the work of three or more authors, Proverbs nevertheless evinces a remarkable theological homogeneity.

Almost as disjunctive as a dictionary, the canonical collection of Hebrew proverbs has little in common with the traditional view of a systematized theology. Yet it exudes Old Testament theology throughout, not formally but pragmatically, for in reality the Hebrew proverbs translate theology into terms of how to live, and how to conserve the desirable values in life. The Hebrew Weltanschauung was grounded squarely upon Hebrew theology. Thus the proverbs, expressive of the godly philosophy of life, complemented the other modes of revelation. Through them the Hebrew "understands," adding cognitive depth to what he "sees" in his redemptive history, "hears" and is commanded in the Law and Prophets, and "experiences" in covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Understanding of life has been simplified when one learns that all living is to be experienced in one of two alternative "ways"--wisdom or folly. Each "way" comprises a totality view of life that is entirely antithetical to its competing view. In no ancient book of wisdom is the

definition of the right way as fully developed as in Proverbs.

The commended wisdom begins in theism and matures in ethical righteousness. Both ideas are comprehended in the theological crux of Proverbs, "the fear of the LORD." A distinctive contribution of the Book to Old Testament Theology is its emphasis on "the fear of the LORD" as the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. The concept of wisdom is conveyed by a number of Hebrew synonyms and near synonyms. Wisdom is wrought especially by discipline and instruction, essentially negative and positive processes respectively. These concern directing one's mind in the way, sifting and sometimes suppressing the words that would surge over the lips, and building one's "house" with initiative and industry. The possessor of wisdom is crowned with honor because he has first learned humility. Life raised to the highest qualitative dimension of ethical fullness follows in wisdom's wake.

The way of folly, conversely, is sinister, because it is ultimately derived from perverseness and perfidy rooted in the will¹ rather than from intelligence quotient. Pride and every form of unrighteousness stalk that road and gush from the mouth of fools. It ends in panic, poverty, and the pains of death.

¹Cf. "the spirit of perversity" as contrasted with "the spirit of truth" set forth as alternative "spirits" in man in "The Manual of Discipline" (iii, 13-iv, 26), The Dead Sea Scriptures, translated by Theodore H. Gaster (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1956), pp. 43-46.

"Yahweh," the covenant name for the God of Israel, is the most common designation of God in Proverbs. Wisdom was His possession even from the beginning of His creation. The literary device of personification is freely employed to depict this attribute of God which the proverbs stress. His omniscience is closely linked with His sovereign control of all things--a prevailing perspective in Proverbs. Regarding God's acts, creation, sovereignty, and judgment are featured most prominently.

Man is viewed as a totality. Parts of man's body and his biological drives enter often into proverbial expression. Prescriptions for health, vigor, and longevity are moral rather than organic, significantly. Original sin is surmised rather than theorized. Human values are appraised and certified for the ideal wife, sex relations, child and youth training. As a social being man's interpersonal relations are charted largely in terms of what should not be done. Friendship is more highly esteemed for quality than quantity. Surety is censured. Slavery is not considered abstractly as to principle but concretely as to its ways. Specific guidance is afforded relative to relations with the king and rulers. Individual consciousness and responsibility is everywhere recognized. Wisdom is the boon of the blessed man who finds "favor and good repute in the sight of God and man."

"Salvation" of an individual is viewed as getting him into the wisdom way of life now! Emphasis is more on salvation that changes this

life than on post-mortem deliverance. Both LAW and GOSPEL are to be found side by side in Proverbs. None can say that he is pure from his sin, therefore he must "trust in Yahweh" who will make his paths straight. The continuous attitude of faith in God in all the practical situations of life may well be the most outstanding soteriological contribution of Proverbs. Faith is brought down to earth without being sullied by the earth. For in the final analysis man's faith and hope must rely wholly upon God Himself, and this is enough, for "there is a future" (23:18; 24:14) for every man who has experienced change in order to follow that way that is "a fountain of life that he might escape the snares of death."

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