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Blessedness in the Context of All the People of God

Cohesiveness Between Biblical Wisdom Literature and the Matthean Sermon on the Mount

By
Cynthia B. Gooch

A Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Biblical & Theological Studies.

Saint Louis, Missouri

2024

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Graduation Date May 10, 2024

Dr. Aaron Goldstein
Faculty Advisor _____

Dr. David W. Chapman
Second Reader _____

Dr. David W. Chapman
Director of MABTS Program _____

Mr. Steve Jamieson
Library Director _____

Abstract

This paper will seek to demonstrate the cohesiveness between wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible and the Matthean Sermon on the Mount, particularly as it regards the concept of blessedness resulting from living in the way of covenantal wisdom. It will also consider possible influences on the manner of presentation of the Sermon occurring through developments in theology and literature during the Second Temple period. Examples of potential influences will include two books from the Apocrypha, Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon, and a selection from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

It will use the book of Proverbs as an anchor for discussion of biblical wisdom and show cohesiveness through wisdom themes. A biblical theological approach will be used to analyze and synthesize scriptural teaching about the rewards of wise living as it benefits the community of the people of God as seen by the results of living wisely in the use of the words אַשְׁרֵי, and μακάριος.

To my husband, Bob Gooch, whose hard work throughout our marriage has financed my studies and who has also supported me in them.

Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
And the one who gets understanding . . .
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.

— Proverbs 3:13, 17

Contents

Preface

During my studies at Covenant Theological Seminary, one of the courses taken had a particularly influential effect on my thinking about important themes in Scripture. This course was Old Testament Psalms and Wisdom Literature taught by Dr. C. John Collins. The emphasis brought out in the course, one that runs throughout those books, became another of a few lenses through which I approach Scripture. My previous emphases were on the biblical covenants and on the kingdom of God; these have not diminished. However, I now also see that the entirety of biblical instruction guides us into seeing that there are only two ways to live. Living according to the way of life benefits not only the individual but also the community of the people of God among whom the individual lives.

Some professing Christians whom I have met have seen a disjunction between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. A second purpose for this paper is to demonstrate that Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is well connected to the teaching in the Hebrew Bible and, in particular, to wisdom instruction, making the Hebrew Bible applicable to New Covenant saints.

This newer lens was also solidified as I was privileged to teach sections from Proverbs in my local church's women's ministry. I believe it was beneficial to the women being taught, and it is my hope that this paper would be similarly helpful to the body of Christ as a whole.

Acknowledgements

In addition to my husband, Bob Gooch, I would also like to thank my pastor, Malachi Tresler, for his influence on the direction of this paper and for his ongoing encouragement and support in my personal spiritual growth. Also much appreciated is his faithful preaching, teaching, and shepherding of the people at Trinity Bible Church in Phoenix, Arizona. I would also like to thank Stephanie Franklin, Director of Women's Ministry at Trinity Bible Church, for the opportunity to teach from the book of Proverbs.

Abbreviations

ANE	Ancient Near East
BCE	Before the Common Era, BC
CE	Common Era, AD
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
HB	Hebrew Bible, Old Testament
Heb.	Biblical Hebrew as found in the MT
Gk.	Koine Greek
LXX	Septuagint (Greek translation of HB)
MT	Masoretic Text
NC	New Covenant
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament, Hebrew Bible
SM	Matthean Sermon on the Mount
Tanakh	Acronym for the combination of Torah-Nevi'im-Ketuvim – i.e., the entirety of the Hebrew Bible.
WS	Wisdom of Solomon

Chapter 1

Introduction

All humanity approaches life from one of two perspectives, each perspective having its corresponding trajectory and end. One approach is derived from the application of godly wisdom and leads to life; the other originates from folly and ends in death. In Proverbs, this binary approach to life is seen in the "most frequent metaphor…of walking on a path or way."[1] In the depiction of these paths, a "walk" [Heb. מַהֲלָךְ (n) or הָלַךְ (v)] describes either the biblically correct or incorrect way to pursue life.

> At birth every human being embarks on a journey which leads either to a full life or to doom. The foolish are those who rely on their own ingenuity, who think they do not need instruction and advice; they walk towards destruction and death. The journey of life will be successful if one heeds the instructions of the sages, which are like a road map; following the path which they describe constitutes wisdom.[2]

For the purposes of this paper, the basic concept of the two ways to live is taken chiefly from the book of Proverbs, as "the book of Proverbs is dominated by the contrast between two paths of life."[3] I also intend to show below that there is continuity between the HB wisdom literature and Jesus's instruction in the SM, including the message of the two ways to live.

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[1] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry (*New York: Basic Books, 2011), 214.

[2] Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Wisdom," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 845.

[3] Daniel J. Estes, "Proverbs and Biblical Theology: Can This Slipper Fit?" *Presbyterion* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 40.

Rationale for This Study

It is my belief that commonalities in subject matter indicate a continuity between the two testaments and, therefore, common instruction and benefit for the people of God throughout the ages.

Continuity Between the Covenants or Testaments

While one purpose of this paper is to demonstrate continuity between HB wisdom literature and the NT teaching of Jesus, in particular his teaching in the SM, it is acknowledged that there has been ongoing discussion regarding such continuity since the close of the NT canon. The interrelationship of the entirety of Scripture is, in my opinion, indisputable. While "the question of the relationship of the Old and New Testaments has been a much discussed issue in the church from the beginning,"[4] in general, the early church saw an unbroken flow between the two. Unfortunately, some more recent movements have seen a disunion between them.

In surveying church history, we find that "interpreters of the first century A.D. were convinced of the unity of Scripture."[5] This perspective continued through the era of the Protestant Reformers, such as Luther, who also "upheld the idea of Scripture's unity."[6] Beale and Carson convincingly sum up the history of scriptural unity as follows:

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[4] Donald Hagner, "How 'New' is the New Testament?: Continuity and Discontinuity Between the Old Testament (Formative Judaism) and the New Testament (Early Christianity)," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 19, no. 2 (2015): 99.

[5] Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 187. "Jewish interpreters of the first century A.D. were convinced of the unity of Scripture. Josephus made this a point of apologetic emphasis. For Philo it was a correlate of 'the strictest verbal inspiration'. . ." Cf. 188 for examples of and quotations from a viewpoint of scriptural unity from the early church, e.g. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, as well as a quotation from Luther.

[6] Maier, 188.

> …even if some contemporary readers do not think the Bible holds together in any theological sense…every thoughtful reader must acknowledge that *the biblical books themselves have been read that way from the time of their early circulation*, and that the writers of the NT books saw themselves not (in some Marcionite fashion) as originators who could cheerfully dispense with whatever they wanted from the OT, but as those who stood under the authority of those OT documents even as they promulgated fresh interpretations of those documents.[7]

When the author of Hebrews wrote, "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb 1:1-2 NRSV), the "biblical author poses the question of the relationship of the Testaments: how does the word of Christ relate to that of the prophets, and in broader terms, is the NT continuous or discontinuous with the OT?"[8] Goldsworthy suggests that part of today's confusion may be the result of modern biblical theology itself as a discipline because it tends to work in either the Hebrew Scriptures or the New Testament separately. "Whatever the reason, the result has been a tendency to treat the two Testaments as if they were independent of each other."[9]

Largely as a result of popular dispensationalist influences, many Christians think of the New Testament as being a completely separated era in redemptive history. I am inclined to look at the unfolding of God's workings, i.e. "the basic dynamic of faith, obedience, ministry, sacraments, covenant family, membership in the people of God, the

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[7] G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, "Preface," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,* eds. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), vii. Italics added.

[8] Graeme Goldsworthy, "Relationship of Old Testament and New Testament," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* eds. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 81, in the subsection titled, "The Nature of the Problem."

[9] Goldsworthy, 81.

mission of God's people in the world, and world-view . . . "[10] as an on-going covenantal relationship between God and his people as being a more accurate way of looking at the whole of scripture.

Wisdom for All the People of God

In this paper, I am approaching the relationship between the OT people of Israel and the NT church by looking at the two bodies "somewhat distinctly, to see what OT Israel is as to its essence, how it is designated and understood in the OT Scriptures, in order then to perceive the essential continuity between that Israel and the NT congregation, gathered in nuclear form by Christ himself and coming to full expression on the Day of Pentecost."[11] Further discussion will follow on the identity of the people of God, whether the context for that term is the HB or NT church.

As with Sandmel, "I regard early Christianity as a Jewish movement which was in particular ways distinctive from other Judaisms. This distinctiveness is an intertwining of events in, and of theology about, the career of Jesus…and the histories of his direct disciples and of later apostles, and what they believed and thought."[12] The continuity between the HB and NT is a part of this view of Christianity as an outgrowth of Judaism.

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[10] C. John Collins, "The New Covenant and Redemptive History," *Faithful Ministry: An Ecclesial Festschrift in Honor of the Rev. Dr. Robert S. Rayburn*, ed. Max Rogland (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2019), 70.

[11] Marten H. Woudstra, "Israel and the Church: A Case for Continuity," in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments; Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 1988), 221.

[12] Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 1 (1962): 4. With his plural reference to "Judaisms," Sandmel is speaking of Judaism as it progressed throughout time and was represented by different groups or factions.

I believe that emphasizing the unity of the two testaments is "important because there is a tendency to separate Old Testament religion from what the New Testament teaches. . . [and] although the New Testament introduces important new developments, these build upon what is revealed in the Old Testament."[13] Barrett explains the need to see scriptural continuity by stressing its *telos*: "The progressive, diachronic nature of the covenant word . . . assumes that the unity present in revelation across redemptive history is amalgamated by its goal. Within the context of his covenant promises, God's revelation to his people builds with anticipation towards its own culmination."[14] Maier concurs: "The concept 'progressive revelation' is nonnegotiable because it arises from revelation itself. Not until Jesus' advent is the 'full' interpretation of the so-called Old Testament manifest (Mt 5:17) . . . simultaneously, both the completion and the peak of God's revelation through history were realized when God 'spoke to us in these last days by the Son" (Heb. 1:2)."[15]

While this paper assumes continuity between the testaments and its relevancy for all the people of God, I also agree with Woudstra, who states, "We share the uneasiness of those who raise critical questions with the statement that the OT must be interpreted *and often reinterpreted* by the new revelation given in the person and mission of Jesus Christ."[16] My contention is that Jesus did not reinterpret in the way Woudstra explains

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[13] T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2008), 172.

[14] Matthew Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel,* New Studies in Biblical Theology 51 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 44.

[15] Maier, 193.

[16] Woudstra, 222. Emphasis in original. Woudstra explains further what his meaning is here: "Especially the word 'reinterpret' could create the false impression that the OT was not truly teaching what the NT says it is. While it is true that a biblical passage just be understood in the light of the entire Bible – i.e., the two

but clarified and expanded the Hebrew Scriptures as part of their natural unfolding of revelation.

Theologically orthodox Christians must accept both the HB and the NT scriptures as the revealed word of God. This leads to the question of how the NT came to be understood as Scripture, that is, "In what sense is the First Testament incomplete? What's new about the New Testament? What difference would it make if we didn't have the New Testament?"[17] The difference, of course, is the life of Jesus.[18] This paper seeks to tie together the teachings of Jesus with those of the writers of the HB in a specific way, that of seeing this consonance through the lens of wisdom literature themes.

Purpose Statement

"Do we need the New Testament because without it we wouldn't know how to relate to God, know how to pray, know how spirituality works?" [19] My reply is a resounding "no." The entirety of the HB proclaims and teaches these things. Goldingay says "the New Testament affirms the ways of worshiping and praying that appear in the First Testament and implicitly draws our attention to them."[20] God's self-revelation "has

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Testaments – this does not mean that one part of the Bible must somehow be seen *correcting* another part." Italics added.

[17] John Goldingay, *Do We Need the New Testament? Letting the Old Testament Speak for Itself* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 11. In calling the Hebrew Bible "the First Testament," he says, "My enthusiasm for the pre-Christian Scriptures also makes me unenthusiastic about *the Old Testament* as a title for them, as it is inclined to suggest something out of date and inferior. Henceforth, I will usually refer to them as *the First Testament."* (7). I am inclined to agree with him and sometimes refer to the First Testament as "the Older Testament."

[18] "Life of Jesus" is being used here as a synecdoche and includes his teachings, his obedient life, death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and sending of the Holy Spirit in new ways.

[19] Goldingay, 27.

[20] Goldingay, 28. I acknowledge that progressive revelation will affect these points throughout time.

not completed itself in one exhaustive act but unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts."[21] In the NT, we find the apex of the self-revelation of the Triune God in Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate cohesiveness between the HB's wisdom literature with Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, focusing generally on wisdom literature themes and especially on the two ways to live. In this way, I intend to support a sense of cohesion between the two testaments and to prompt New Covenant believers to understand the two ways to live, thus encouraging them to choose the path that leads to life.

Research Questions

The following questions have guided my research:

1. How can biblical wisdom literature be defined/assessed?
2. What are clear explanations from Scripture of the two ways to live?
3. Does Jesus's Sermon on the Mount display elements of HB wisdom literature?
4. How might the display of both testamental continuity and the teaching about the two ways to live encourage and instruct the people of God today?

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for those in the church who would desire to further clarify the way to live wisely. By looking at wisdom themes in general and how they

[21] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 5.

cohere with Jesus's teachings in the SM, the continuing sense of the exclusivity of the right way to live from both the HB and NT should be seen. If this is understood, it will benefit both the community of the people of God and the individuals within it to see and choose that right way, allowing them to better encourage and edify each other and grow the Body of Christ in its sanctification process. As this is done, it will also enable the church to fulfill its mission as a light to the world.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Assumptions

There are a number of assumptions being made that should be understood when reading this paper. Important assumptions are as follows: 1) All references to HB or NT texts are being accepted in their current redaction or form; 2) The work of any author being referenced does not necessarily indicate that I agree with other things written by the same author or perhaps even within the same work; 3) reference to a particular work does not necessarily imply having read the entire work but possibly only those portions relevant to the topic at hand; 4) The HB and NT are understood as the inspired works of God and are without error in their autographs; 5) Jesus is understood as the second person of the Trinity, the unique figure in history having a hypostatic union of divine nature and human nature, and as set forth and summarized in the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds.

Flow of Thought

The purpose of this study is to establish that the wisdom teaching found in the SM can be found earlier in the Scriptures (i.e., in the OT). The thought flow might be visualized in the shape of an hourglass. First is the task of establishing some groundwork for wisdom literature in general.[22] After all, how can one discuss wisdom literature from any source, biblical or extrabiblical, without determining a definition, at least for the

[22] See Chapter 3, pp. 12-19, "Framework for Wisdom Literature," for this general framework that includes a discussion on genre (12), and extrabiblical wisdom literature (14).

purposes of this discussion? It seems appropriate to lay out some kind of definition. The general topic of wisdom literature will then narrow to that of wisdom in the HB, and particularly the book of Proverbs.[23] A very brief look at literature from the Second Temple period will then be included[24] in order to reflect the time of transitional writings from what became the text of the HB canon to that of the NT.

This all is being done in order to consider background that may have been possible influences from previous periods on the manner and content of the presentation of Jesus's teaching in the NT. The introduction to that Second Temple period section (27-31) especially focuses on sapiential and apocalyptic tendencies seen in extant literature and considers that apocalyptic literature of the period may have even evolved from traditional sapiential literature.

The wisdom found in Jesus's teaching is then discussed.[25] This focuses in on the Beatitudes, including the topics of the macarism and human flourishing.[26] Finally, the discussion expands out to the application for all the people of God by highlighting the

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[23] See Chapter 3, pp. 19-28, "Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible," for this discussion that includes introductory material and a discussion on cultural and theological specificity (21), a focus on wisdom in the book of Proverbs (24), and a discussion on the two ways to live in Proverbs (26).

[24] See Chapter 3, pp. 29-47, ""Wisdom in Second Temple Judaism," for this discussion, including a focus on the books of the Apocrypha (34) including Ben Sira/Sirach/Ecclesiasticus (37), Wisdom of Solomon (40), and the Dead Sea Scrolls' 4QInstruction (45).

[25] See Chapter 4, pp. 48-69 , "Wisdom in the Teachings of Jesus," including Jesus as wisdom teacher (48), a discussion on the Matthean Sermon on the Mount (52), similarities to wisdom genre in the HB and Apocrypha (54), the didactic character of Jesus's teaching (56), the eschatological trajectory of Jesus's teaching (58), and the two ways to live that Jesus lays out in his teaching (60).

[26] See Chapter 4, pp. 63-68, "The Beatitudes," that includes the topics of the macarism and human flourishing (63) and on the meaning of אַשְׁרֵי, and μακάριος (66).

path leading to life and blessedness and its benefit to both individuals and to the community of the people of God as a whole.[27]

On a more personal note, given my conversion to Christianity in a dispensational church environment, it was important to emphasize continuity between the HB and NT scriptures. The conclusion to my paper also contends that the path to life as it was intended by God is only experienced through Jesus Christ, who provides the ultimate goal of human life, to dwell in intimate relationship with the Creator God while walking in his ways. The blessedness resulting from this is the source of human flourishing and results in the development of special traits, traits described by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

[27] See Chapter 5, pp. 70-77, "Application for the People of God," that includes discussion of "The People of God: Who are They?" (70) and "Wisdom as Skill in Godly Living" (73).

Chapter 3

Literature Review

In this section, it seemed best to begin with a broad approach to establish what is meant by the words "wisdom literature" and to set the stage for its comparison to Jesus's teachings in the SM. To do this, I start by showing how wisdom literature is different from other forms of writing. Once explained, the discussion goes from the enormously large topic of genre in general and a possible wisdom genre to an example of wisdom literature from outside Israel, that of Egypt. Egyptian literature was chosen for several reasons: the geographic proximity of Egypt to Israel, the shared history of Egypt and Israel during Israel's sojourn in Egypt, and the astonishing similarities between Egyptian and biblical wisdom. From there, the discussion's focus moves to specifically HB wisdom, and especially that found in Proverbs. This then goes chronologically to wisdom in Second Temple Judaism, looking at a few examples of possible viewpoints of wisdom during that time.

Framework for Wisdom Literature

Genre

What is genre? "Although rhetorical criticism has recently provided a profusion of claims that certain discourses constitute a distinctive class, or genre, rhetorical criticism has not provided firm guidance on what constitutes a genre."[28] Dooley and

[28] Carolyn R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151.

Levinsohn state that "for a given language and culture, many texts fall into recognizable types...Each text type has a particular social or cultural purpose, around which clusters a characteristic combination of linguistic or textual properties."[29] They use the term genre to refer to the above as "types of text which can be characterized in this way as *recognizable combinations of textual properties in pursuit of a particular cultural goal*."[30] For the purposes of this paper, I am adopting this definition.

While the term itself may be fraught with difficulty, the concept of genre is meant "to produce meaning" and may even be considered "necessary for the production of meaning."[31] I agree with Cheung's assessment that, "Genres are created to accomplish the speakers/writers' *communicative purpose*."[32]

Generally, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the attempt to determine genre involved looking at specific elements within the writings such as shared vocabulary and tended to then isolate texts with such seeming similarities. This might be called a taxonomic approach. However, much of the later scholarship rejected that approach. This rejection eventually led to the outlook I am favoring here. As Bloom says, "There are *no* texts [i.e., texts simply isolated by genre definitions], but only relationships *between* texts."[33] That is, texts communicate to their readers by relying on "an inevitable

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[29] Robert A. Dooley and Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Analyzing Discourse: A Manual of Basic Concepts* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2001), 7.

[30] Dooley and Levinsohn, 7. Italics added.

[31] Mark R. Sneed, "Is the 'Wisdom Tradition' a Tradition?" *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (Jan 2011): 54.

[32] Simon Chi-Chung Cheung, *Wisdom Intoned: A Reappraisal of the Genre 'Wisdom Psalms*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 613 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 5. Italics added.

[33] Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 3, https://archive.org/details/mapofmisreading00bloo. Bracketed words are my own.

interplay with the endless network of meaning in which they exist."[34] The word network used above calls to mind a kind of spiderweb of interrelated words and ideas not determined by rigid guidelines, but written to communicate specific thoughts for specific purposes.

This study of the meaning or even existence of wisdom literature as a genre was intended to be a way to understand the further discussion of wisdom literature. It would be difficult to examine or consider wisdom without having some idea of what is meant by this term, at least for the purposes of this paper.

Extrabiblical Wisdom Literature

While the discussion of a wisdom genre might have simply jumped to wisdom in the HB, it seemed to be a disservice to the reader to possibly infer that HB wisdom was altogether unique in world literature. "'Wisdom' as a description of a genre of material is [a term used] to explain a phenomenon that extends throughout the world, in that the collection of wisdom sayings is a human activity common to all cultures."[35]

Realizing the presence of already-existing bodies of literature that exhibit some elements of those found in the HB, it seemed good to address whether there might be a direct influence between extra-Israelite works and those of biblical literature. Is it possible that HB wisdom is a mere restatement of the wisdom from other nations? We see in the HB that "Israel recognized the presence of wisdom in other cultures such as

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[34] Will Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 109.

[35] Katharine Dell, *Get Wisdom, Get Insight: An Introduction to Israel's Wisdom Literature* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2000), 2.

Egypt (Isa. 19:11-13), Phoenicia (Ezek. 28; Zech. 9:2), Persia (Esth. 1:13; 6:13), and Babylon (Dan. 2:12-13; 5:7) . . ."[36] However, while "there was recognition of such, sometimes the wisdom associated with other nations was viewed negatively because of their pride, or because the wisdom was associated with divination and magic, but generally their wisdom was recognized as legitimate."[37] As I hope to show below, while there were some similarities and possible influences, the wisdom of other peoples had an entirely different foundation.

There are many examples that could be given of this general phenomenon; however, I am limiting this discussion to that of Egypt because of its geographic proximity, its shared history with Israel during Israel's sojourn there, and because of its similarities to HB wisdom literature, as discussed below.

Egyptian Wisdom Literature

In this section, I consider some ways in which Egyptian wisdom literature has similarities to biblical wisdom literature.

> Like contemporaneous Ancient Near Eastern sapiential corpora, Egyptian wisdom consists of two subgenres – didactic and speculative…Both types understand the world in general, and human life in particular, to be ruled by the laws of *mꜣʿt* – justice and righteousness. Employing a vocabulary that reflects sapiential ideas and themes, they also share the goal of passing down knowledge derived from life experience and philosophy.[38]

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[36] Edward M. Curtis, *Interpreting the Wisdom Books: An Exegetical Handbook,* Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017), 24.

[37] Curtis, 24. Exactly what is meant by "legitimate" is unclear.

[38] Nili Shupak, "The Contribution of Egyptian Wisdom to the Study of Biblical Wisdom Literature," in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition: New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies,* ed. Mark R. Sneed, Ancient Israel and Its Literature, no. 23 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015), 266. Shupak does note that the "Egyptian possesses no term for 'wisdom' as an abstract concept, this term being borrowed from biblical studies. The closest parallel is *rḫ* 'to know.'"

In this assessment, we see that there are commonalities in the manner of teaching Egyptian wisdom and in its vocabulary that seem to demonstrate similar ideas and themes as compared to that of the HB. In the Egyptian didactic literature, "the most common form [wisdom teaching] takes is a father's instruction of his son . . . [in which] he seeks to guide his son 'in the way of life/god,' drawing on his life experience to direct his son/heir into the proper path."[39] Certainly, this is also found in such statements in Proverbs as, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching" (Prov. 1:8), "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments" (Prov. 3:1), or "Hear, O sons, a fathers instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight. (Prov. 4:1)

In Egyptian wisdom,

> The objective of human behavior is harmony with the principle of *mɜʿt*… Conduct that violates this order must be corrected – deeds and acts that infringe the social ethic (falsehood, covetousness, gluttony, wrath, lack of restraint, gossip, etc.) or the religious framework (disdain of the temple and its attendants, impropriety during religious rituals, etc.)[40]

In an amazing counterpart to Proverbs, in Egyptian literature "the teacher-sage's task [is]to set young men on the path of life that leads to *mɜʿt*, he instructs them in how to establish, maintain, and exemplify this by inculcating integrity, truth, modesty, self-restraint, self-control, silence, generosity, mercy, and so on."[41] Seeing such correlations between Egyptian and biblical wisdom, I would agree that there are almost shocking

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[39] Shupak, 267.

[40] Shupak, 270.

[41] Shupak, 271.

similarities between Egyptian and biblical wisdom literature, in which "the two bodies resemble one another in structure, literary form, style, vocabulary, and principal topics."[42]

There is also terminology used in the Egyptian literature similar to that of the HB. In Egyptian literature, "The one who fails to avail himself of the instruction is a fool – *iwty-ḫʒty* – one who 'lacks understanding, sense,' *ḫm* 'simpleton,' *wḫʒ* 'fool,' *gwš* 'crooked.'"[43] In Proverbs, we read similarly that "fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7b) and that "The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray." (Prov. 5:22-23)

Another area of comparison is that of what might be called "proverbial instruction." Hildebrandt states that Egyptians "also [have] a long tradition of proverbial instructions…extending from the Old Kingdom (c. 2600-2100 BC)…down to demotic and the Ptolemaic times (c. 300 BC)."[44] Shupak confirms this, also saying that "As in the Egyptian counterparts the proverbs in Proverbs can be divided into various types: those that liken two things via the use of 'like' or 'as' (Hebrew כ) (e.g., Prov 10:26; 25:13; 26:110; those that compare to things by juxtaposing them without any conjunction (e.g., Prov 11:22; 25:14, 25,28; 26:17); and 'better than' proverbs (Hebrew טוֹב ... מ ...) (e.g.,

[42] Shupak, 284. In the examples given by Shupak following this statement, the comparison is limited to the book of Proverbs as a whole. Also to be noted is that my focus was admittedly mainly on vocabulary and topics; I am assuming here Shupak's evaluation of other literary characteristics mentioned to be correct.

[43] Shupak, 270.

[44] Ted A. Hildebrandt, "Proverb, Genre Of," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, eds. Tremper Longman, III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 529.

Prov 17:1; 22:1; 28:6)."[45] Shupak also notes that "the use of antithetical words or concepts common in Egyptian wisdom is also prevalent in biblical wisdom."[46]

My conclusion from this comparison is that while biblical wisdom literature may have similarities to that of surrounding nations, especially Egypt, the HB is different in its foundation and focus. As Dell states, "Despite shared characteristics with ancient Near Eastern wisdom, Israelite wisdom has its own character and its own place in a distinctively Israelite realm of ideas."[47] Where the two diverge is also discussed by Shupak. The disparities "stem primarily from their different religious frameworks – polytheism vs. monotheism."[48] While Egyptian literature does include a concern for Egyptian worship practices, in contrast, the entire corpus of the HB is based on relationship between Yahweh and his people, Israel. This is also the reason the target *audiences* of the two groups differ.

"The Egyptian authors…provide an education for those destined for administrative positions within *state institutions*, their compositions are addressed to senior and middle-ranking officials."[49] Unlike those being addressed in Egypt, McKane says that "For the most part, the aspect of *career wisdom* which dominates the Egyptian Instruction is hardly evident in the examples of the genre in the book of Proverbs . . ."[50]

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[45] Shupak, 286.

[46] Shupak, 286.

[47] Dell, 2.

[48] Shupak, 290.

[49] Shupak, 290. Italics added.

[50] William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1970), 407. Italics added.

While Proverbs 31 clearly addresses the training of a king,[51] teaching is more often from any father in Israel instructing his son in godly living.[52] It is the theological underpinning that makes the difference between Egyptian and HB wisdom teaching.

Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible

Introduction

Dell points out that "in biblical studies the term [wisdom] has been narrowed to describe the wisdom phenomenon in Israel and in surrounding cultures in the ancient Near East."[53] Examining which portions of the HB are commonly assigned to the category of wisdom books, it is seen that there is a generally-accepted wisdom canon. "The Old Testament wisdom books are Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs."[54] They have been so designated because "wisdom is a prominent theme in this literature, and they are characterized by a common methodology and epistemology.[55]

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[51] E.g., Prov 31 where the superscription says, "The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him," and gives instruction for kings, with such admonitions as "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or from rulers to take strong drink, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted." (31:4-5)

[52] See Prov 1-8 for examples, e.g. "Hear my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching…" (Prov 1:8)

[53] Dell, 2.

[54] Will Kynes, "The 'Wisdom Literature' Category: An Obituary," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (April 2018), 2. Song of Songs is not always included in the category, and Job is sometimes excluded. Kynes states, "The closest approximation of a Wisdom category in antiquity is the collection associated with Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs), which is indeed clearly represented in both Jewish and Christian traditions." (2) After further discussion, he states, "These changes suggest the ancient category is different from the modern one both quantitatively, in regard to its content, and qualitatively, in terms of its defining essence." (3)

[55] Curtis, 23-24. Italics added.

Beyond this, Dell states that wisdom influence can be found *throughout* the HB, not only the specific books mentioned above. She further notes it "extend[s] into the Apocrypha, with the books of Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon in particular. . . Writings influenced by wisdom extend further into the Pseudepigrapha, New Testament and other early Jewish and Christian writing, as well as including exciting new material amongst the Qumran writings found by the shores of the Dead Sea."[56] A few of these resources will be explored further below.

Among biblical scholars, attitudes toward and studies of biblical wisdom literature have not always been positive. During his HB studies, one author states the "paradigm position concerning the nature of the wisdom corpus…was [that it was] described as an *alien body* in the Hebrew Bible…"[57] Concurring, another author says, "Not too long ago, wisdom literature was somewhat of an orphan, even eliminated from the concern of Old Testament theology."[58]

Since then, this attitude seems to have been largely and happily abandoned. In contrast to the former perspective, Murphy states, "The trend to disregard the wisdom literature has reversed itself. Now the question would rather be, Where has Old Testament wisdom *failed* to appear? The recognition of wisdom influence upon the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Law has steadily increased."[59]

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[56] Dell, 3.

[57] Mark R. Sneed, "Introduction" in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition: New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies*, ed. Mark R. Sneed, Ancient Israel and Its Literature, no. 23 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015), 1. Italics added.

[58] Roland E. Murphy, "The Interpretation of Old Testament Wisdom Literature," *Interpretation* 23, no. 3 (July 1969): 289.

[59] Murphy, "Interpretation," 290.

Cultural and Theological Specificity

In addition to the encouraging changes in scholarship in its attitude toward wisdom literature, other aspects have been explored to help in better understanding the authorial intent of wisdom writings. One salient point for this paper is that "genre is culture-specific, and each language and culture will have a bewildering variety of specific genres which are distinctive to it."[60] Because the Bible has a divine source and seeks to inculcate specific beliefs and behaviors, a biblical wisdom genre must also include the communicative purpose or intent of God. Writing from the perspective of literary theory, Brown suggests a working definition of genre as "a socially defined constellation of typified formal and thematic features in a group of literary works, which authors use in individualized ways *to accomplish specific communicative purposes*."[61] That is, what is being said is intended to create a specific response from its reader/hearer, i.e., its *perlocution.* "What the hearer *does in response* to [an] utterance is [its] perlocution."[62]

I understand, then, that two of the elements that makes HB wisdom distinctive from other writings that might be placed into a general worldwide wisdom category are its theological underpinnings and its intent to influence its reader/hearer in ways related to the Israelite's *relationship* to Yahweh. "In an extraordinary way, Proverbs raises the

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[60] Dooley and Levinsohn, 7-8.

[61] Jeannine K. Brown, "Genre Criticism and the Bible," in *Words and the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation and Literary Theory*, eds. David G. Firth and Jamie Grant (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 122. Italics added.

[62] Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 22. Kindle. Italics added. For more on the origination and explanation of this terminology, see J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Barakaldo Books, 2020; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) or C. John Collins, *Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science, and Truth in Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018). See particularly Chapter 3 (51-88).

theological question of the relation of ordinary life in the cosmos to God the Creator."[63] It is not a set of rules for obtaining one's best life now, but it is teaching of wisdom in relationship to Yahweh and others. "Proverbs endeavored to persuade its readers to choose God's narrow path of wisdom rather than to follow the broad path of folly . . .Its overall purpose is to transform immature people into adults who are wise, mature, and God-honoring."[64]

There is some disagreement with this assessment, however. Weeks seeks to define wisdom in terms of the subject matter in which it is *not* interested, finding that "wisdom literature has no specific interest in the relationship between God and his people."[65] Dell notes, "The wisdom literature of the Old Testament has often been felt to be a strange companion to the rest of the Old Testament *because it does not concern itself with the covenant or the saving history of Israel*."[66]

The conclusion that wisdom literature has no connection to the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and the nation of Israel seems to have come from looking within the books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes "in vain for the dominant themes of Yahwistic thought: the exodus from Egypt, election of Israel, the Davidic covenant, the Mosaic legislation, the patriarchal narratives, the divine control of history and movement

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[63] Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Proverbs," in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 171.

[64] Daniel J. Estes, "Proverbs," in *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus' Bible*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013), 370.

[65] Stuart Weeks, "Wisdom Psalms," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel,* ed. John Day (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 297.

[66] Dell, 2. Italics added.

toward a glorious moment when right will triumph."[67] Because certain elements are not overtly found in these books as compared to HB narratives, they would then be deemed to be disconnected from them.

I believe this is an incorrect assessment and disagree with the conclusions drawn. Collins does an excellent job demonstrating the connection between biblical wisdom and covenantal concerns in Scripture. He references the "so-called 'Wisdom Psalms' that is poems on 'wisdom' themes in a book of songs for Israel's public – and therefore liturgical and covenantal – worship"[68] as an example. He then discusses Proverbs as "covenantal wisdom," which will be explored more fully below. As this discussion moves forward, I will examine that while wisdom literature may not *overtly* reference the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel, it is nevertheless the vital underpinning throughout its teaching.

Plantinga summarizes a connection between wisdom and the divine by saying, "In the literature of Scripture, wisdom is, broadly speaking, the knowledge of God's world and the knack of fitting oneself into it."[69] As Curtis says, "This kind of knowledge is possible for anyone who carefully observes the world *because* God has designed order and regularity into it."[70] He further says, ". . . it appears that some of this material comes from God in what appears to us to be a secondary sense."[71] That is, while the origin of the

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[67] James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Atlanta, GA: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 24.

[68] C. John Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," *Presbyterion* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 10.

[69] Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 115.

[70] Curtis, 25. Italics added.

[71] Curtis, 25.

wisdom is God and the establishment of that wisdom is enabled by divine order, it is recorded and disseminated by human means.

Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs

"Our best starting point in any consideration of the wisdom material is the book of Proverbs, which contains some of the oldest wisdom maxims collected by the sages of Israel."[72] I agree with this appraisal and with Longman who states that the book of Proverbs is "the preeminent collection of wisdom in the Hebrew Bible."[73] Dell calls it "a book universally acknowledged as the supreme example of traditional Israelite wisdom" and of the proverb as "the basic form of all wisdom and in that sense is at the heart of the enterprise."[74]

What is a proverb? "The proverb or sentence is the most fundamental and, thus, the primary genre of the wisdom literature,"[75] says Sneed. "The term translated 'proverbs' in the title of the book of Proverbs, *māšāl* [מָשָׁל], means 'likeness' or 'similitude.'. . .The *māšāl* calls for one to reflect and make connections mapping the ideals expressed in the text onto the current situations."[76] Collins uses the phrase "skill in the art of godly living" to describe the essence of biblical wisdom.

> A crucial notion of 'wisdom' (Hebrew *khokmâ*) is that of 'skill' (the nuance of *khokmâ* in Exod. 28:3), particularly skill in choosing the right path for the desired result. Since the covenantal framework defines what is

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[72] Dell, 14.

[73] Tremper Longman, III, "Proverbs 1: Book of," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry & Writings,* eds. Tremper Longman, III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 539.

[74] Dell, 5.

[75] Sneed, "Is the 'Wisdom Tradition' a Tradition?", 65.

[76] Hildebrandt, "Proverb, Genre of," 532.

> proper in both the path and the result, we may call this 'covenantal wisdom': skill in the art of godly living.[77]

Longman defines proverbs as "pithy observations, admonitions and prohibitions that *advocate certain behavior* that the book defines as wise and discourages other behavior (often the opposite) that it calls foolish."[78] This definition reflects the instructive intent that I find to be a key element.

Kidner wonderfully stresses the paramount intent of biblical proverbs saying,

> [The book of Proverbs] is not a portrait-album or a book of manners: it offers a *key to life*. The samples of behaviour which it holds up to view are all assessed by one criterion, which could be summed up in the question, 'Is this wisdom or folly?' This is a *unifying approach to life*, because it suits the most commonplace realms as fully as the most exalted.[79]

It must then be asked whether this guidance was solely for the nation of Israel.

Again, Collins rightly points out that the wisdom given to Israel was a function of the task of the nation as a whole, to act as a nation of priests to all of humanity – "to show all mankind what true humanness should look like, by living as God's renewed humanity . . . that is, the nation was established in order to mediate the Abrahamic blessing to the whole world."[80] This theme will be taken up again in Ch. 5 of this paper as it looks at the application for the people of God.

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[77] C. John Collins, "Wisdom and Worship: Proverbs; Psalms, Wisdom Books, Prophets," (class notes for Psalms and Wisdom Books, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2022): 26.

[78] Tremper Longman, III, "Fear of the Lord," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry & Writings,* eds. Tremper Longman, III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 201. Italics added.

[79] Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 17:13. Italics added.

[80] C. J. Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 12.

Two Ways to Live in Proverbs

The book of Proverbs quite clearly contains the theme of the two ways to live that is being emphasized in this paper. One way this is demonstrated is through the use of Hebrew parallelism, often antithetical in type. "In the case of antithetic parallelism, a certain opposition is evident, even though the same general idea is expressed."[81] For example, in Proverbs 11:20, we read: "Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the LORD, but those of blameless ways are his delight." In this verse, Alter says the parallelism "effects a confrontation between the two compound designations, 'crooked of heart' (*'iqshei lev*) and 'blameless of way' (*temimei darekh*)."[82] Here, then, are the two ways from which people must choose to live – "the crooked, the twisted, and the perverse over against the blameless, the whole, and the perfect and, perhaps also, rightness of action ('way') over against contorted thought and intention ('heart')."[83]

Proverbs does often emphasize *visible works* being done by people, but the poetic parallelism it contains can also demonstrate movement "from external action to internal state, from the *way* to the *heart*, and we move along a trajectory of consequences, *from* the folly that leads one astray in life to a condition of anger, frustration, alienation from God,"[84] as well as its opposite. Perdue finds that one of two aspects intrinsic to the wisdom tradition is "to discover, sustain, and even create dimensions of aesthesis through

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[81] Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 6

[82] Alter, 211.

[83] Alter, 211.

[84] Alter, 215. Italics added. For example, I note the admonition of the internal aspect in Prov 4:23, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."

language which takes up residence in the heart and forms and shapes both human character and the structure and norms of society."[85]

Longman warns, "One might be deceived into thinking that [the book of Proverbs] is no more than the skill of living…but Proverbs is more than a collection of observations, prohibitions, and admonitions. At its foundation, Proverbs describes *wisdom as a relationship*; it begins with the 'fear of the LORD' (Prov 1:7)."[86] Goldsworthy likewise notes that "most commentators believe that the introduction to the book (1:1-7) is an explanation of the intended purpose of the whole corpus. This statement concludes with a proverbial statement that 'the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge'."[87] This fear is *demonstrated by* walking in his ways and in obedience to his commands by having chosen the way of the wise. In this way, the fear of the LORD leads to choosing the godly way and following through by walking in that way.

The "fear of the LORD" in Proverbs conveys "the basic premise…that to fear Yahweh is to stand in a subservient position to him, to acknowledge one's dependence on him."[88] That wisdom flows out of relationship to Yahweh and the fear of him then validates the understanding that the proverbs, again, are *not merely a book of life skills*. "The phrase's insistence that wisdom begins with a relationship with God demonstrates that the very concept is *theological and not just practical*."[89]

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[85] Leo G. Perdue, "The Wisdom Sayings of Jesus," *Foundations & Facets Forum* 2, no. 3 (Sept 1986), 5.

[86] Tremper Longman, III, "Proverbs 1: Book of," 539. Italics added.

[87] Graeme Goldsworthy, "Proverbs," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 209. Prov. 9:10 also states "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." This is reiterated in Ps. 111:10 and Job 28:28.

[88] Longman, "Fear of the LORD," 202.

[89] Longman, "Fear of the LORD," 202-203. Italics added.

Relationship to Yahweh and the attitudes and behavior resulting from it provide flourishing for all creation.[90]

> Proverbs regularly sees life as a choice between the way of wisdom and the way of folly. The way of wisdom involves submission to God and trust in him at every point; the way of folly involves autonomy, independence, and self-direction, and each person must regularly choose between these two paths. Wisdom results in blessing from God and the benefits that come from living in harmony with the way it was designed to function. These blessings include *shalom* and abundant life.[91]

As mentioned in the introduction, I believe Scripture teaches that all humanity approaches life from one of two perspectives, each perspective having its corresponding trajectory and end. One approach is derived from the application of godly wisdom and leads to life; the other originates from folly and ends in death. The implications of following the way of wisdom affect not only Israel but the whole world.

Wisdom in Second-Temple Judaism

Introduction

Given the amount of time that passed between the closing of the canonical HB books and the beginning of the NT books, i.e., the period commonly called the Second Temple period, it is appropriate to consider at least some of the developments that occurred both in the history of the Jewish people and in their literature before

[90] This then again reflects the priestly purpose of Israel to the nations, a topic that will be revisited later.

[91] Curtis, 68.

transitioning to Jesus's SM text. "The Sermon comes to us historically, literarily, and theologically in the context of Israel's story and self-understanding."[92] Luz states:

> Many, if not most, of the New Testament authors were Jews. Their cultural world was not merely the Bible but also the Jewish tradition, or, better, the Bible within the Jewish tradition. Thus, the biblical basis of New Testament texts is greatly enlarged. Discovering the 'biblical soil' of most New Testament texts is not only a matter of the biblical texts quoted in the New Testament, but is also a matter of allusions to the Bible, and, even more, the whole of the biblical world in ancient Jewish interpretation.[93]

Historically, "The biblical evidence for the postexilic period is more extensive than for the exile."[94] Extra-biblical evidence is also plentiful for the Second Temple period.[95] Themes in the book(s) of Ezra-Nehemiah are described as transformation from a time of elite leaders, narrow holiness, and oral authority to a time of community, spreading holiness, and the authority of written documents.[96] At the end of the book(s) of Ezra-Nehemiah, "we find a holy people living in a holy city. It is that people's history

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[92] Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 25.

[93] Ulrich Luz, Foreword to *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew,* by Leroy A. Huizenga, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 131 (Boston, MA: Brill, 2009), xiv.

[94] Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 389. Logos.

[95] Provan, Long, and Longman, 389. The authors say, "Among the most helpful are the Cyrus Cylinder, the Behistun (Bisitun) inscription, the inscription of Udjahorresnet, as well as the Aramaic Elephantine papyri." They also add "the testimony of early Greek historians like Herodotus, Xenophon, and Ctesias, all contemporaneous with the Persian Empire. Traditionally, Herodotus has been considered basically reliable because he researched his study and showed himself critical of his sources at points, but Xenophon and particularly Ctesias have never met with the same level of confidence. However, in the present skeptical climate, no ancient historian escapes suspicion, including Josephus, the first-century AD Jewish historian, particularly since he wrote long after the events of this period and often simply paraphrased the biblical story line."

[96] Provan, Long, and Longman, 408.

that continues to reverberate down through the ages as it is interpreted, developed, built upon, and dissented from by those who come afterward . . .”[97]

The purpose of this section is to explore whether or not the particular resources being referenced from this era may have influenced the content or manner of presentation of the teaching of Jesus in some way, particularly in the SM. Because an effective examination of any text requires looking not only internally, at the text itself, but also canonically and externally (i.e., outside the pages of Scripture), it is necessary to do at least a cursory examination of developments and understanding of the HB and other texts prior to the time of Jesus. “The importance of a community of understanding, or faith, in further shaping the ways in which documents are used must be considered…The existence of two Testaments that have guided vital religious communities over millennia plays a central role in the way in which we understand the Testaments individually and in interrelationship.”[98]

When looking at thought development during the Second-Temple period, it is logical that “if, accordingly, all these writings are post-Tanach Judaism, then obviously the Tanach has some status and influence in all of them. What could conceivably surprise us would be the absence of Tanach influence from this literature, not its presence.”[99] That is to say, the HB is the assumed foundation for what follows. This observation also fits

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[97] Provan, Long, and Longman, 409.

[98] Rodney Petersen, “Continuity and Discontinuity: The Debate Throughout Church History,” in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments; Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 32.

[99] Sandmel, 3.

well with my contention that early Christianity was an outgrowth of Judaism and requires continuity of the HB and NT scriptures.

Beyond the HB, "parts of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha are important for New Testament scholarship. The New Testament was not written in isolation from the history, literature, and culture of its time, but instead draws on many cultural concepts common in Judaism of the time."[100] However, within the scope of this paper, the survey must be necessarily brief, for a consideration of possible extra-biblical concepts in Judaism during this period is "a topic as large as Scripture itself and involving many complex streams, rivers, and eddies."[101]

With this in mind, in my brief survey, I will sample Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon, and 4QInstruction. When looking at possible influences, there is, however, a danger in looking at some about which we are aware that could lead to "the assigning of the biblical texts to…autonomous interpretative communities [that would] *systematically distort* their subject-matter."[102] (Emphasis in original.) Cotterell and Turner say there only may be valid connections within literature "if there is a good probability that the alleged parallel was actually part of the presupposition pool *shared by the writer and his intended readers*; not merely ideas current either later, or elsewhere, or in a different social conceptual milieu."[103] For example, with respect to the DSS, they write that

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[100] Rachel Klippenstein, John D. Barry, and Edward J. Herrelko III, "Pseudepigrapha, Old Testament," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary,* eds. John D. Barry, et al (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Logos."

[101] Pennington, *Sermon,* 25.

[102] Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 7. An example of this kind of autonomous interpretive community would be that found at Qumran as it is represented in extant texts.

[103] Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 101.

validity may be appropriate "*as long as the shared concepts are traced back to the common milieu of Judaism rather than specifically and genetically to the Dead Sea Community* as such (which, on other grounds, is much less probable)."[104]

Erroneous connections may also be made in the process of comparing specific texts. Possible issues are categorized by Sandmel as follows: 1) Some passages are alleged as parallel; 2) a direct, organic literary connection is assumed to have provided the parallels; and 3) the conclusion is drawn that the flow is in a particular direction. The inappropriate connections of citations and inferences are what he calls *parallelomania*.[105] Sandmel also states that he is not discouraging such attempts at discovering literary parallels and influence, but its "extravagance" in doing so,[106] an approach I find reasonably cautious.

Until its destruction in AD 70, the temple continued to be the center of worship. This seems to have held true for most Jews, who "accepted the sacredness of the temple and the general teaching of the Torah."[107] Judaism prior to and up to the time of the destruction of the temple was not, however, monolithic. It was, instead, "a complex reality, with a wealth of different, rival ideologies (or theologies) and reciprocal adjustments, as takes place within every culture of the world."[108] It may be tempting to

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[104] Cotterell and Turner, 101. Italics added.

[105] Sandmel, 1. Sandmel states that he originally encountered the term *parallelomania* in a French book of about 1830, "whose title and author I have forgotten." Italics added.

[106] Sandmel, 1.

[107] Lester Grabbe, An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel and Jesus (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010), xii, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost).

[108] Paolo Sacchi, *The History of the Second Temple Period* (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 15, eBook Collection (EBESCOhost). First published as JSOTS 285 by Sheffield Academic Press,

say that the Judaism of this period is defined by specific characteristics, but "there was no official orthodoxy (in the Christian sense), for it is clear that there were many interpretations of the Torah and many different views about how to apply the law outside the temple (within the temple, the priests were in control).[109]

During this time, the Jewish population was spread throughout much of the known ancient world. Not only were the people scattered, but this was also "an age in which the Jewish people, wherever they lived, were under the political and military control of other nations"[110] and covers a time of great political upheaval.

Despite the apparent variety of beliefs and practices among the branches or forms of Second-Temple Judaism, there were some trends or developments I saw in my research, especially as they could relate to NT writings. One example of note is that it seems at least some of the Second-Temple literature reflects an apocalyptic view. There is also reason to believe that what might be called traditional wisdom or sapiential literature in the HB may have developed or flowed into other genres and, in particular, that of an apocalyptic worldview.[111]

There are, of course, differences between the two categories, sapiential and apocalyptic. "The Jewish sapiential tradition is based on the premise that wisdom can be found in all creation . . . [In contrast], . . . The apocalyptic premise

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2000. Also see fn 12 of this paper referencing Sandmel and his plural reference to "Judaisms," Sandmel is speaking of Judaism as it progressed throughout time and was represented by different groups or factions.

[109] Grabbe, *Introduction*, xii.

[110] James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2022), 1.

[111] John J. Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic in the Hellenistic Age," in *History of Religion,* Vol. 17 (1977), 121-122ff. Collins suggests this possibility as coming from the writing of von Rad, but the resource quoted is in German and, therefore, I am unable to read the primary source for evaluation.

is that the world is in a state of anomie. Wisdom has retired to heaven and can be known only by heavenly revelations."[112] Burkes, in her discussion of WS for example, says its "form is generally sapiential, but it merges the worldviews of two genres [sapiential and apocalyptic]; moreover, it is not the only example of such merging in this time period."[113]

Books of the Apocrypha

There is a wide variety of literary genres represented in this body of literature. Because of the possible connection between wisdom and apocalyptic literature in this period, these two genres will be highlighted, and places where they come together will be noted. "Apocalypses are among the most interesting kinds of text composed in the Second Temple period. These works have received their name from their resemblance to the New Testament book of Revelation (whose Greek title is *apokalypsis*)."[114] VanderKam suggests the apocalypses, "normally have these generic elements: (1) they are revelations (2) by a supernatural being such as an angel (3) to a human recipient."[115]

Sometimes, erroneous assumptions about the apocalypses are based partially upon the awareness of an element of dualism and how dualism is defined. Gammie states that there are "two types of dualism which are essential for a proper understanding of the

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[112] J. J. Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation": 140.

[113] Shannon Burkes, "Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Wisdom of Solomon." *Harvard Theological Review* 95, no. 1. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002: 40.

[114] VanderKam, 106.

[115] VanderKam, 106-107.

apocalyptic literature and its relationship to the wisdom literature."[116] He narrows these two types with their various subtypes to "spatial dualism" and "ethical dualism."

Spatial dualism is, generally, what might be perceived as spiritually geographical. It is "the phenomenon of thinking in terms of two planes (the earthly and heavenly) [which] is widely observed as a conceptual characteristic in the writing of the ancient Near East, in Judaism, Qumran, John, and the Letter to the Hebrews."[117]

In ethical dualism, "the writer sees an opposition between two classes or groups of human beings: the righteous v. the wicked; the godly v. the impious. He explains this by stating that "in *ethical* dualism an opposition is seen between two classes or groups of people; in *cosmic* dualism this opposition is extended to the world-wide scene."[118] With ethical dualism, we see an element that is clearly found in the book of Proverbs, particularly chapters 10-15, "in which antithetic parallelism predominates – abound[ing] in contrasts between the wicked (*rᵉšāʿîm*) and the righteous (*ṣaddîqîm*)" and similar

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[116] John G. Gammie, "Spatial and Ethical Dualism in Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 93, no. 3 (1974): 358.

[117] Gammie, 361-362; 357-358. Gammie notes that "strictly speaking, the ancient Near East world-view was a three-storied cosmos and not two." (362) He describes other categories of dualism: ""A second type of dualism, *temporal,* is frequently called eschatological. In temporal dualism there is an opposition between this age (*hā-ʿôlām hazzęh*) and the age to come (*hā-ʿôlām habbā'*)." He also discusses *psychological* dualism, that in which "the contrast between good and evil is internalized and seen to be an opposition not between groups of people but between principles or impulses waging battle within man." (358) When considering the two genres of wisdom and apocalyptic, and especially their possible influence on the teachings of Jesus, Gammie takes a strong stand. "A proper assessment of the beginnings of Christianity and Mishnaic Judaism is only possible if there is clarity and precision in our understanding of the make-up of apocalyptic thought before and after the start of the Christian era."[117]

[118] Gammie, 357-358. Italics added.

contrasts.[119] Gammie states that "ethical dualism is a leading concept in Jewish apocalyptic as well as in Jewish sapiential literature."[120]

Collins emphasizes the same two genres of literature as being represented in the Apocrypha: sapiential sayings and apocalypticism. "Wisdom sayings are of various kinds. What they have in common is the attempt to express a general truth in a concise way. At the most fundamental level we can distinguish between declarative sayings, in the indicative, and commands and prohibitions in the imperative . . . [In contrast to wisdom sayings] . . . collections of declarative sayings are never found in the apocalypses."[121] Two selections from the apocrypha are being examined below for discussion of the sapiential and apocalyptic natures of the literature. These were chosen as commonly cited representative examples of these two kinds of literature.

Ben Sira/Sirach/Ecclesiasticus

After discussing some of the difficult textual issues involved with the present redaction of Ben Sira, Witherington states, "What the complex textual history of this book reveals is that Ben Sira's writings were very popular in early Judaism and later in the early Church. The popularity of the book and especially the finds at Qumran *and* at Masada suggest that it would be fruitful to explore the possibility of the influence of Ben Sira's work on the later Wisdom material found in the Jesus tradition."[122]

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[119] Gammie, 372.

[120] Gammie, 384.

[121] John J. Collins, "The Root of Immortality: Death in the Context of Jewish Wisdom," in *Seers, Sibyls & Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 393.

[122] Ben Witherington, III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 76-77. Italics in original.

Ben Sira "is a wisdom book. It assumes a situation in which Ben Sira, the experienced sage and teacher, is instructing a younger man ("my child") who wishes to become wise,"[123] immediately calling to mind the book of Proverbs. Its "favorite mode of communication is short sayings of two members in synonymous (same ideas) or antithetical (opposite ideas) parallelism,"[124] again recalling the book of Proverbs. Ben Sira called his pupils to "seek their fortune, their honor, and their good name through diligent observance of the demands of the God of Israel first and foremost. The path to Wisdom, and to a successful and secure life, was first of all the way of Torah…"[125] His teaching reveals his beliefs that "the rewards for leading a life guided by wisdom and the Torah are happiness in the present and a 'good name' after death."[126]

While his search for wisdom is clearly influenced by foreign cultural resources, especially that of Greece, he writes, " [A man's] care is to rise early to seek the Lord, his Maker, to petition the Most High, to open his lips in prayer, to ask pardon for his sins. Then, if it pleases the Lord Almighty, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; He will pour forth his words of wisdom and in prayer give praise to the Lord" (Ben Sira 39:5-6). With these words, the author shows that his commitment is unlike that of Greek philosophers by whom he may have been influenced; his ultimate concern is his relationship to God.

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[123] Daniel J. Harrington, S. J., *Invitation to the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 78. Harrington also explains that "the title 'Sirach' derives from the author's name 'Jesus son of Eleazar son of Sirach' (50:27). It is customary to refer to the author as 'ben Sira' ("son of Sirach"). In the Latin tradition, the book is known as 'Ecclesiasticus' ("church book")."

[124] Harrington, 78.

[125] David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 153.

[126] Harrington, 89.

Noting changes or developments in the themes and approaches of Ben Sira from the HB wisdom literature, DeSilva writes:

> Wisdom literature had already moved from the practical, with Proverbs, to the philosophical, with Job and Ecclesiastes, and Ben Sira gives attention to both aspects of the expanding purview of the sage. He wrestles with the questions of sin and human responsibility, on the one hand, and God's omnipotence and sovereignty, on the other…[127]

I did find that much of Ben Sira reads similar to Proverbs, including the call to seek the correct path, the path of wisdom."[128]

[20] Happy the person who meditates on Wisdom,
and fixes his gaze on understanding;
[21] Who ponders her ways in his heart
and pays attention to her paths,
[22] Pursuing her like a scout
and watching her entryways;

[1] He who fears the LORD will do this;
he who is practiced in the Law will come to Wisdom.

(Ben Sira 14:20-22; 15:1)

Ben Sira's references to the law certainly carry forward its importance. It recalls Jesus's words that "whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teachers others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 5:19) Harrington states that "Sirach is a precious resource for understanding the

[127] deSilva, 187.

[128] "Ben Sira's favorite mode of communication is short sayings of two members in synonymous (same ideas) or antithetical (opposite ideas) parallelism. His major contribution to the Hebrew wisdom tradition consisted in joining individual sayings by common words or themes, and using small units to develop logically a theme or an argument in paragraph form." Harrington, 78.

presuppositions of Judaism in the late Second Temple period and for discerning what was or was not innovative about Jesus and early Christianity."[129]

The Wisdom of Solomon: Wisdom, Apocalyptic, or Both?

While the Greek title of this work is *The Wisdom of Solomon,* he is never mentioned by name within its text. "It is clear," however, "that the author assumes the mantle of Solomon and speaks in his name. Thus the work fits into the wisdom tradition that is dominated by the figure of Solomon."[130] Besides its anonymous authorship, "There is no evidence that the Wisdom of Solomon ever had canonical status in any Jewish group. As with a number of Jewish writings from antiquity, all our textual and other data come via the Christian tradition. No evidence of the work is found at Qumran."[131]

The book is "a work that presents Jewish thought and the reading of the Bible in philosophical terms . . . a wisdom work composed in Greek during the first century (BCE or CE), probably in Alexandria . . . It presents key concepts in Judaism through Greek philosophy, with a particular focus on the afterlife. . . as a response to suffering, the nature of wisdom, the fate and death of the wicked, and the problem of idolatry."[132] Despite a dearth of specifically Jewish manuscript evidence for the book, "it became a

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[129] Harrington, 90. After informing the reader that the book is not quoted directly in the NT, Harrington states that the strongest parallel is between Mt. 11:28-30 and Ben Sira 6:24-25; 51:26-27). He does admit that "even there it may be a matter of common terminology and conceptuality."

[130] Murphy, *Tree,* 83.

[131] Lester Grabbe, *Wisdom of Solomon*, T&T Clark Study Guides (London; New York: T&T Clark, 1997), 28.

[132] James K. Aitken, "Wisdom of Solomon," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint,* ed. James K. Aitken (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 401.

very important text in early Christianity, as authors often found in it material ripe for Christological appropriation."[133]

Unlike most of the HB which does contain some references to an afterlife but most often refers only to Sheol, there are references in WS to some form of immortality. In the beginning section of the book (1:1 – 6:21), "the author asserts his firm belief that people who are truly righteous never really die, because after their earthly death they continue to live with God. Since this is true, it is wise to be righteous. Righteousness, then, connects wisdom and immortality."[134]

There is also an eschatological aspect to the work. "The picture which emerges is somewhat confused, but its broad outlines are nevertheless not difficult to draw. The just souls, after passing through the crucible of suffering during their earthly existence, are portrayed as being in the hand of God and perfectly at peace (either in some neutral zone in Hades, or more likely in Heaven)."[135]

In the WS, we also find a relationship between traditional wisdom and the development of an apocalyptic genre. "Studies have appeared from time to time investigating the relationship between wisdom and apocalypticism and their possible affinities with one another."[136] Burkes says, "…one seems to encounter a transformation of the earlier wisdom tradition: *the earlier sapiential literary form is now being used as a*

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[133] Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 283.

[134] Roger A. Bullard and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on the Wisdom of Solomon*, United Bible Societies' Handbooks (New York: United Bible Societies, 2004), 7.

[135] David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,* The Anchor Bible, Vol. 43 (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 32.

[136] Burkes, 23.

vehicle for apocalyptic ideas…"[137] She continues, "The book [WS] seems to be sapiential in form (a series of reflections by the ranking wise man of Jewish tradition, rather than a visionary experience mediated by a supernatural being) *but* bridges the sapiential and apocalyptic worldviews." [138]

Considering possible circumstantial issues that may have influenced this development, I note that "the Jews of the Second Temple period were not a settled group. Despite having returned to their promised land, they still conceived of themselves as in 'exile' – they were still oppressed by foreign rulers. Thus, Israel was in a posture of anticipation and longing; they were waiting for God to fulfill his promises to break into the world and redeem his people."[139] During the Second-Temple period, the focus was turning from merely living in a wise way to what would provide future hope. The kind of kingdom ruled by David had not returned; by the time of Jesus, the Israelites were living under Roman rule. Where could the people find hope?

"As the wisdom tradition developed, confidence in [regularity in the world] faltered…This is not surprising, since the connection between society and cosmos would naturally lead to a reevaluation of the cosmos if traditional social structures began to break down, as happened in the exile."[140] How were the sons of Abraham to explain the predicament they were in if they were, in fact, the people of God? As Brueggemann suggests, "A theodic crisis occurs when the dominant social values, presuppositions, and

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[137] Burkes, 22. Italics added.

[138] Burkes, 40.

[139] Michael J. Kruger, The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 49.

[140] Burkes, 33.

policies no longer function meaningfully and claim assent, no longer are credited by public opinion as having foundational authority."[141]

Kruger notes that "not only is this heightened expectation of a new redemptive kingdom evident in a number of Second Temple texts, but a number of New Testament texts show these same expectations of a new kingdom – people were looking for the messiah (Jn 1:41; 4:25) who would bring the 'redemption of Jerusalem' (Lk 2:38), 'the consolation of Israel' (Lk 2:25), and would 'restore the kingdom to Israel' (Acts 1:6)."[142]

Canonical formation may also give clues to this mindset. The HB canon does not end with Ezra-Nehemiah, which would be a chronological ordering, but with the books of Chronicles. "By not ending with [Ezra-Nehemiah], the Tanakh purposely ends on an *eschatological note*. The reforms of Ezra-Nehemiah are the beginning of the restoration. If Ezra is a second Moses, he, like the first Moses, has not produced and cannot produce a change in the heart of the people. That awaits some future day. The exile continues even though Israel is in the land….Real exile will not be over until the Messiah comes."[143]

"Apocalypticism (some prefer 'apocalyptic') is generally thought to be characterized by 'apocalyptic eschatology'. This may include an end of the world in catastrophic circumstances, with a resurrection, final judgment, and new heavens and a

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[141] Brueggemann, "The Social Significance of Solomon as a Patron of Wisdom," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East,* eds. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 130.

[142] Kruger, 49. As examples of such second-temple texts, Kruger lists Tob 14:5-7; Bar 3:6-8; 4:36-37; *T. Mos.* 10:1-10; 2 Macc 1:27-29, 2:18; Wis 3:7; 1QSb 5:23-29; and 1 QH^{a} 14.79-9. In a footnote on heightened expectations of a new redemptive kingdom, Kruger says that this is also "evident in the varied attempts to lead a revolution during the first century" and gives several examples of such (49n9).

[143] Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible,* New Studies in Biblical Theology 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 224-225. Italics added.

new earth. But this is not the only form it might take."[144] Burkes suggests that "the worldview of the Jewish apocalypses contrasts with that of the wisdom books in three ways. In the former one finds: 1) the supernatural world and its agents are much more important; 2) an eschatological judgment and postmortem reward and punishment are expected; and 3) the feeling that this world is somehow fundamentally flawed is always present."[145]

In the Wisdom of Solomon 1:1 - 6:21, "the author asserts his firm belief that people who are truly righteous never really die, because after their earthly death they continue to live with God. Since this is true, it is wise to be righteous. Righteousness, then, connects wisdom and immortality."[146] The WS turns the gaze of the reader/listener away from present distress to future hope in which the righteous triumph.

Burkes summarizes as follows: "The Wisdom of Solomon, then, presents the reader with an unusual ensemble of characteristics." She asks, "How then is the book to be understood? …Neither 'wisdom' nor 'apocalypticism,' as the terms are usually employed, is a sufficient description of the whole. The book seems to be sapiential in form (a series of reflections by the ranking wise man of Jewish tradition, rather than a visionary experience mediated by a supernatural being) but bridges the sapiential and apocalyptic worldviews."[147]

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[144] Grabbe, *Wisdom,* 56.

[145] Burkes, 23.

[146] Bullard and Hatton, *Handbook,* 7.

[147] Burkes, 40. Here, Burkes also questions whether it might be wise to "reconsider the common notion that a literary form entails a particular worldview."

Dead Sea Scrolls: 4QInstruction

"Altogether some nine hundred manuscripts have been identified among the fragmentary remains of texts found in the eleven caves . . . It is convenient to group the manuscripts from the caves into several large categories."[148] Goff states that among the many texts, "4QInstruction is generally considered a wisdom text because of its admonitions, pedagogical ethos, and practical advice that will improve the ordinary life of the addressee,"[149] and that among the Qumran scrolls "4QInstruction is the largest wisdom text from Qumran."[150] Because of its affinity with wisdom literature, the focus in this brief section will be on the 4QInstruction document.[151]

"The text's addressee (the מבין or 'understanding one') is often exhorted to study the רז נהיה" [*raz nihyeh*].[152] This *raz nihyeh* can be generally understood as the mystery

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[148] deSilva, 156. DeSilva groups them into the following headings: Biblical Texts (including copies of biblical books that later became parts of the HB, excerpts and translation of biblical books, targums – a term used for an Aramaic translation of the HB – commentaries on biblical books, paraphrases from biblical books, and copies of deuterocanonical/apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books), and Nonbiblical Texts (including legal texts, new pseudepigrapha, poetic works, liturgical works, wisdom texts, eschatological texts).

[149] Matthew J. Goff, "The Mystery of Creation in 4QInstruction," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10, no. 2 (2003):163n1. Accessed through JSTOR at http://www.jstor.org/stable/4193271.

[150] Goff: 163.

[151] R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1998), 173-174. France comments on the danger of emphasizing the importance of texts from Qumran: "The Qumran sect was not a major influence in first century AD Palestine. It kept to itself…Indeed, this sect inevitably receives attention out of all proportion to its contemporary significance, because of the accident of the preservation of many of its writings. But as it is our one first-hand source of knowledge of a non-orthodox Jewish community of the period, we may use it as evidence of the use of the Old Testament in at least one stream of Jewish thought outside the dominant Pharisaism."

[152] Goff, 163. Regarding the phrase רז נהיה, Goff states, "רז is a term of Persian provenance that is translated as 'secret' or 'mystery.' The word *raz* often signifies the revelation of heavenly knowledge in late second temple texts. The term occurs frequently in the Dead Sea Scrolls." He also notes that "while the term *raz* is relatively common in late second temple material, the phrase *raz nihyeh* is rare..." and in the texts where it is used, the "*raz nihyeh* refers to the divine control of reality, presented as a revealed truth." (165) Another resource consulted shows an example taken from 4Q415 6 4. Here, the English translation is given as " the mystery of existence" (Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study*

of God's providence as he has revealed it. Goff states that this phrase, רז נהיה, occurs over twenty times in the composition, and the addressee is "often exhorted to study the רז נהיה. He is told to 'gaze' (נבט) upon, 'examine' (דרך) 'meditate' (הנה) upon and 'grasp' (לקח) it. He is encouraged to contemplate the רז נהיה because he can learn from it." In summary, Goff says, "In 4QInstruction, "the רז נהיה is the means by which wisdom is obtained."[153]

To a certain extent, the DSS exhibit some of the same blending or overlap of genre boundaries. Burkes states, "4QInstruction,…the community rules and the *Hodayot* reveal, in different degrees, similar tendencies," noting, "All of these compositions date to the Hellenistic and Roman periods."[154] Citing the work of Strugnell and Harrington, she states "The text contains proverbial advice, but it also reveals apocalyptic themes such as eschatological judgment, eternal life for the elect, and revelation."[155]

Like the wisdom of Proverbs, "the importance of the theme of creation for assessing the רז נהיה has been emphasized most forcefully by A. Lange. For Lange, the רז נהיה represents a predetermined natural order governing the world."[156] Goff points out that Lange sees that "the רז נהיה therefore signifies a 'Schöpfungsordnung' that is in direct

Edition (translations) (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997–1998). Logos. Per Goff, much of the lack of accord in translation centers around the *nifal* of the verb היה.

[153] Goff, 163.

[154] Burkes, 40n77.

[155] Burkes, 22n6. For more information on the work of Strugnell and Harrington, see John Strugnell and Daniel J. Harrington, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

[156] Goff, 164. Goff quotes A. Lange, *Weisheit und Prädestination: Weisheitliche Urordnung und Prädestination in den Textfunden von Qumran* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 18; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 62, As this was not available in English, I was unable to verify all that is said in Goff regarding this work.

continuity with Proverbs 10:9, which also explains that the world has an inherent sense of order by appealing to creation."[157]

In contrast to Lange, Elgvin argues that "4QInstruction's understanding of the world and man is determined more by apocalypticism than by traditional wisdom."[158] Despite their differences regarding the focus of the instruction, "both Lange and Elgvin acknowledge that 4QInstruction has affinities with both the sapiential and apocalyptic traditions,"[159] showing the overlap of both and possible development of apocalypticism from wisdom.

As stated in the introduction to this section, "The importance of a community of understanding, or faith, in further shaping the ways in which documents are used must be considered…"[160] In an effort to consider this community aspect, I have very briefly explored Second-Temple wisdom literature for its possible influence on Jesus's teaching in the SM. Because any author writes from his or her own cultural and temporal perspective, in looking at the above examples from both the HB and Second-Temple period, this writer sought to find clues as to what may have influenced Jesus in the manner, content, or trajectory in which he taught. In this limited survey, there were no direct quotations that would have easily demonstrated such influence, but there were general tendencies that may have had some impact as discussed below.

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[157] Goff, 164.

[158] Torleif Elgvin, "Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Early Second Century BCE – The Evidence of 4QInstruction," *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress,* July 20-25, 1997, eds. L. H. Schiffman, E. Tov, and J.C. VanderKam (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society/Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, 2000), 239.

[159] Goff, 164.

[160] Petersen, 32.

Chapter 4

Wisdom in the Teachings of Jesus

Introduction: Jesus as Wisdom Teacher

I see in both the HB and NT a "pilgrimage of wisdom."[161] In biblical wisdom development, like Witherington, I see Jesus as "the pivotal figure who not *merely* mirrors previous developments in sapiential thinking and the creation of Wisdom material, but also charts some new courses . . ."[162] This combination of Jesus's teaching being both a mirror of biblical wisdom from the HB and as doing things in a fresh way should be no surprise. If he is charting new courses, it is not because he is abolishing what had come before; it is in his manner of teaching that intended to lead to deeper understanding of the HB while its essential content remains unchanged. Jesus is the authoritative interpreter of the HB as he is both its ultimate object (*telos*) and its author. He is the anticipated Messiah of the HB who was, in the NT, inaugurating the inbreaking kingdom reign spoken of in the psalms and prophets.

In scholarship, I found Jesus is at times identified as a "sage," a word often used as a technical term for those who studied and taught in the wisdom tradition. Sneed says that biblical wisdom experts often "maintain that the wisdom literature or tradition

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[161] Witherington, xi. Witherington's book traces the theme chronologically but makes some assumptions I do not share.

[162] Witherington, xi. Italics added.

reflects the worldview of a particular group, the sages."[163] If a formal concept of "sage" is accepted, then Jesus could be seen as a sage because

> Jesus' main chosen way of public communication appears to have involved the art of persuasion by figurative or indirect speech, and thus it seems that he intended to be seen, at least in part, as some kind of sage. It is also quite likely that Jesus was perceived to be some sort of sage by the part of his audience that was conversant with the world of Jewish Wisdom traditions.[164]

Jesus, of course, did not use *only* the kinds of speech mentioned as typical of wisdom teaching to communicate. What does seem to occur in his speech is that "Jesus usually sapientialized whatever he said, often expressing prophetic or apocalyptic ideas in some sort of Wisdom form of speech."[165] Belcher simply says that "it is appropriate to call [Jesus] a 'sage,' mainly because Jesus was a person of wisdom."[166]

I do agree with Witherington when he says, "It is not difficult to demonstrate in a general way the degree of indebtedness of the Jesus material to Jewish Wisdom traditions."[167] Concurring with this, Schnabel says "The Gospels portray Jesus as a (prophetic) wisdom teacher who used aphorisms, riddles and parables to convey his message (according to some scholars over 70% of the Jesus tradition is in the form of

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[163] Mark R. Sneed, "'Grasping After the Wind': The Elusive Attempt to Define and Delimit Wisdom," in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition: New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies,* ed. Mark R. Sneed, Ancient Israel and Its Literature No. 23 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015), 39. Sneed believes this is impossible, saying, "Worldview is an anthropological and comparative religion term that signifies the way a culture makes sense of the world…The wisdom literature primarily focuses on the ethical dimension." For more on what constitutes a sage, see Bernd U. Schipper, *Proverbs 1–15: A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs 1:1–15:33,* ed. Thomas Krüger, trans. Stephen Germany, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2019), see esp. p. 10.

[164] Witherington, 155.

[165] Witherington, 201.

[166] Richard P. Belcher, Jr., *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature,* New Studies in Biblical Theology, Vol 46 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 189.

[167] Witherington, 155.

some sort of sapiential utterance)."[168] It is the above-referenced elements of aphorisms, riddles, and parables within wisdom teaching that help to persuade me that Jesus was at least partially a wisdom teacher in the tradition of HB wisdom teachers.

Some of the SM beatitudes, which will be examined further below, "have the standard form and content of Old Testament blessed sayings . . . Hearing the word (Torah) and obeying it is a very common topos in Old Testament beatitudes (e.g., Pss 1:2; 119:12), while coming to Zion to worship God is also often mentioned (Pss 65:5; 84:5)."[169] As the initiator and mediator of the New Covenant, the biggest changes in Jesus's teachings as compared to HB wisdom teachers revolve around his identity and the New Covenant effects. Unlike the scribes in the NT, Jesus "was teaching them as one who had authority." (Mt. 7:29)

> Jesus is not simply a conduit of God's teachings the way Moses was. He is the *source* of those teachings. He possesses authority that Moses and the other prophets never had. Moses was only a messenger. Jesus is both the sender and deliverer of the message. Jesus is Yahweh in the flesh. He doesn't say 'thus says the Lord.' His teaching comes from within: '*I* tell you.'"[170]

Jesus states in Mt 5:17 that he did not come to annul the Torah or the Prophets but to fulfill them. Goldingay suggests that his use of the word *fulfill* may point in another direction than the more common understanding of "obeying" the law. He states: "In effect it means something more like filling out or filling up. In Matthew 5 it makes sense to think of Jesus filling out the expectations of the Torah and the Prophets, working out

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[168] Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Wisdom," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 845-846, in subheading "Jesus, the wisdom of God: Jesus as wisdom teacher,"

[169] Perdue, 18.

[170] Carmen Joy Imes, *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 144.

their implications."[171] Similarly, as Jesus makes "explicit something implicit" contained in the Tanakh, "one could say he is fulfilling or filling out or filling up the Torah by making explicit what the command *implies*, as well as by obeying it."[172] I see this as an aspect of the inbreaking of the eschatological aspect kingdom of God.

As Pennington points out, "unlike the merely proverbial wisdom appeal such as Solomon might give, based on inviting his son to reflect on the human outworking of one's choices, the One greater than Solomon who is *both Sage and eschatological Prophet* must appeal to more than human wisdom, to an eschatological, kingdom irruption."[173]

Although my desire is to display the influence of the HB and Second-Temple Judaism wisdom in Jesus's teaching in order to demonstrate continuity, "The fact is that Jesus was not a teacher of the law, or a preacher of wisdom, *such as could be found among his contemporaries*; his message burst the bounds of late Judaism."[174] More on this will be seen below.

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[171] Goldingay, 30-31.

[172] Goldingay, 31. Italics added.

[173] Pennington, *Sermon,* 271. Italics added.

[174] Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus and the Message of the New Testament*, ed. K. C. Hanson, Fortress Classics in Biblical Studies (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 21. Logos. Italics added. Jesus certainly *was* a teacher of the law and preacher of wisdom, but not "such as could be found among his contemporaries." He was the preeminent teacher and interpreter of the law and of wisdom.

Sermon on the Mount

Introduction

"We must start with the most fundamental observation – namely, that the Sermon comes to us historically, literarily, and theologically in the context of Israel's story and self-understanding."[175] Pennington tells his readers that with his approach, he situates the Sermon "in the dual context of Jewish wisdom literature and the Greco-Roman virtue tradition, both of which are concerned with the great theological and existential question of human flourishing."[176]

Addressing what he believes to be a mistaken approach, Allison says that while much has been written on the SM, what *has* been written often approaches it "as though the chapters were complete unto themselves, as though they constituted a book rather than a portion of a book,"[177] thereby ignoring the context and misinterpreting the passage because of it. It cannot be isolated from its context in Matthew's Gospel and placed separately into something akin to *How to Be* [*or perhaps Become*] *a Kingdom Subject.* As Eco says, "Interpreting texts involves discerning the nature of the text, the very intent of

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[175] Pennington, *Sermon,* 25.

[176] Pennington, *Sermon,* 1. It is certainly not within the scope of this paper to comment on the Greco-Roman virtue tradition that may have influenced the SM. For more on Jesus as the one true philosopher who teaches us how to experience the fullness of our humanity in the kingdom of God, see Jonathan T. Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher: Rediscovering the Wisdom Needed for the Good Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2020).

[177] Dale C. Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination,* Companion to the New Testament (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2015), xi.

the text, composed of words and strings of words that have conventional meanings and functions."[178]

Another common hermeneutical error is to divorce the person speaking from what is being said, "as though it contains an ethic that can be separated from Christology. The Sermon, however, is not a book of proverbs with an anonymous and faceless author. Rather, the discourse presupposes and teaches important things about its speaker, *whose identity is crucial for interpretation*."[179] As mentioned above, in the SM as with other teachings of Jesus, it must be remembered that "Jesus is the author of the law and its true interpreter,"[180] that is, "…the ethical mandates are in force, but always through the mediation of Jesus's teaching…It is his interpretation of the cited OT text that is regarded as authoritative for the reader.[181]

The literature on the SM is extensive and even this statement cannot begin to enumerate or elucidate the many aspects covered.[182] The theological background to the SM undoubtedly includes all of the HB, in keeping with my previous agreement with

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[178] Leroy A. Huizenga, *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 55. This is not a direct quotation from Eco but is part of a discussion involving the work of Umberto Eco, "Interpretation and History," in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation,* ed. Stefan Collini, Tanner Lectures in Human Values (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 24.

[179] Allison, 15. Italics added.

[180] Peter J. Gurry, "John 7:53 – 8:11 - Go and Sin No More" (sermon, Trinity Bible Church, Phoenix, AZ, February 11, 2024).

[181] Daniel M. Gurtner, "Matthew as Teacher of Israel's Scriptures in His Judaic Context," in *Jesus as Teacher in the Gospel of Matthew,* Library of New Testament Studies 644, eds. Charles L. Quarles and Charles Nathan Ridlehoover (New York: T&T Clark, 2023), 48.

[182] Gary A. Tuttle, "The Sermon on the Mount: Its Wisdom Affinities and Their Relation to Its Structure." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20, no. 3 (September 1977), 244n6; Pennington, *Sermon,* 3. Tuttle comments, "The bibliography of studies on the Sermon on the Mount is massive." Commenting on the same issue, Pennington says, "The researcher knows he or she is in deep water when discovering that there is not only an unmanageable amount of secondary material on the Sermon but also a cottage industry of tertiary work that organizes and summarizes the secondary literature."

Sandmel that "early Christianity was a Jewish movement . . ."[183] My intention here is to narrow the scope in background and context from *all* of the HB to that of its wisdom aspects and a portion of what other factors may have entered into both its content and manner of presentation.

In the SM, we see at least the following features in common with the examined wisdom literature: similarities to HB and apocryphal wisdom genre, its didactic character, the propounding of the choice between two ways to live, and its eschatological trajectory.

Similarities to Wisdom Genre in HB and Apocrypha

Before continuing to the topics below, I proffer an interesting possibility related the Lord's Prayer (or perhaps, more rightly, the Disciples' Prayer) and the apocryphal literature mentioned in this paper. Interestingly, "Three of the very few occurrences where one finds God addressed as Father in pre-Christian Jewish literature are to be found in Sir. 23:1, in Sir 51:10 in prayer, *and* in Wis 14:3 in direct address ('O Father'),"[184] the two apocryphal writings I examined as examples of wisdom literature of the period. While the Lord's Prayer is at the center of the SM[185] and addresses God as

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[183] Cf. Sandmel in note 12 of this paper.

[184] Witherington 106.

[185] Pennington, *Sermon,* 222. Pennington calls the Lord's Prayer "the center of the center of the center of the Sermon." While Pennington is careful to note that there have been many efforts to determine the structure of the SM and that the discussion of structure is certainly not over, he affirms that the "Sermon is the work of an artistic theologian, inspired to take assorted teachings of his Master and present them in a coherent and rhetorically powerful and effective way." (112) He then says, "Most would agree that there is a basic – quite simple – threefold structure to the Sermon in terms of an introduction (5:3-16), body (5:17-7:12), and conclusion (7:13-27)." (115) The main body section "is marked clearly with an *inclusio* referring to 'the Law and/or the Prophets' in 5:17 and 8:12." (119) Following his outline for the structure of 6:1-21, he states, "As noted, the Lord's Prayer fits into this structure as a central excursus on the second of the three examples of greater-righteousness piety . . . Very significantly, this structure puts the Lord's Prayer at the center of the center of the center of the Sermon, something that is certainly not an accident . . . For now

Father, it is, of course, not the only time Jesus refers to God as his Father. However, in the prayer, he is teaching the disciples to pray and instructs them to address God as their Father.

Was this possibly more easily accepted because of at least a slight familiarity with Ben Sira and the WS?[186] Jesus may well have had more reasons for addressing God as his Father before his disciples than can be discerned from what is revealed or deduced from the text. We may also never know the answer as to whether these references in Ben Sira and WS were helpful in setting this context for his hearers, but the possibility is intriguing.

Considering the possible influences of Second Temple Judaism on the manner of Jesus's teaching,[187] and the apparent paradoxes in the SM *macarisms* [more on this word and meaning below] I note that there are similarities between the SM and WS. In Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-3, the author writes,

> But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
> and no torment will ever touch them.
> In the eyes of the foolish they *seemed to have died*,
> and their departure was thought to be a disaster,
> and their going from us to be their destruction;
> *but they are at peace*. (NRSV)

Compare this to the description of those who are blessed for being peacemakers (Mt. 5:9) and the reward Jesus says is in store for those who are "persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Mt. 5:11-12). Did the focus of Jesus's *macarisms* in Matthew at

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the point is that the structure of the Sermon highlights the fundamental importance of the Lord's prayer, even as the church has long practiced." (125)

[186] With the term "familiarity," it is not meant to be implied that there was a definite direct knowledge of these texts by Jesus. It may be, for example, that familiarity would come from community exposure.

[187] Here, this would also include possible influences on Second-Temple Judaism by Hellenistic and Roman philosophical and cultural influences.

least partially result from "the [Jews'] fear that something is wrong with the world [that] is assuaged by the promise of a judgment and a life after death"[188]? Could it be that when Jesus introduces the subject of persecution, this is an example of a development from traditional wisdom literature to an apocalyptic-eschatological vision? From my brief examination of the texts I examined, I suspect that both may be the case; while assuredly not completely new subject matter, the focus in the SM seems to emphasize an apocalyptic-eschatological focus more strongly than what might be found or inferred from wisdom literature.[189]

Didactic Character

In my earlier examination of wisdom literature, I mentioned wisdom's didactic character.[190] Tuttle says that "there can be no doubt that in its present redaction the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew is presented as having a didactic character. The narrator's introduction (5:1-2) and conclusion (7:28-29) cast the sermon in a didactic framework."[191] In these passages, Tuttle notes that even the word "taught" (ἐδίδασκεν) blatantly indicates that the nature of his discourse was teaching.

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[188] Burkes, 23.

[189] The "day of the LORD" references in the prophetic portions of the HB certainly *also* include a final vindication of those who would claim that they had unjustly suffered calamity, but my own impression is that this was more often seen as a temporal judgment and not an "eternal, heavenly kingdom" outlook; that is, Jesus was *clarifying* what the prophets saw and foretold.

[190] Cf. the section of this paper, "Egyptian Wisdom Literature" (54). Its didactic nature is often seen through the trope of father-to-son instruction.

[191] Tuttle, 214.

However, in contrast to wisdom teaching as commonly seen in the HB, in Jesus's words as presented in Matthew, we see the principle of *indicative before imperative*.[192] "Every word of the Sermon on the Mount was preceded by something else. The preaching of the kingdom of God preceded it. The granting of sonship to the disciples preceded it . . . And Jesus' witness to himself in word and deed preceded it. The example of Jesus stands behind every word of the Sermon on the Mount."[193] This important point is one that helps the reader to avoid the misunderstanding that the SM is merely ethical teaching that describes the requirements for *entrance* into the kingdom of God. To the contrary,

> Matthew probably shifted from use of the verb 'preach' (*kērussō*) that described Jesus' evangelistic proclamation in Matt 4:17 and 23 to the verb 'teach' (*didaskō*) in 5:2 to hint that the SM was not primarily about how one entered the kingdom. Rather, it was a description of the character and conduct of those who already belonged to the kingdom. The SM is not a call to repentance; it is a description of the expression and evidences of true repentance.[194]

Nevertheless, as Tuttle helpful elucidates, "not only . . . features typical of Israel's wisdom are pervasive in the sermon but . . . the final call to attention and obedience in 7:24-27 is a wisdom speech and contains a key to the structure of the sermon."[195] He points out that this passage contains a comparison of the wise to the foolish, that its comparison is "fundamentally antithetical," and that "its focus is on performance." Tuttle asserts that "all of these components have clear parallels in the OT wisdom corpus and

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[192] This principle is certainly seen elsewhere (consider the Ten Words introduction Ex 20), but it is found less so in Proverbs or other wisdom writings.

[193] Jeremias, 33.

[194] Charles Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Modern Church*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology 11 (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 38.

[195] Tuttle, 214.

. . . when taken together the cumulative effect is to suggest quite decisively that Matt 7:24-27 is wisdom speech."[196]

Eschatological Trajectory

In my literature review, I briefly examined Ben Sira and the WS. Ben Sira seemed slightly more optimistic that an appeal to the people to return to Torah might positively affect the spiritual condition of the Hebrew people as they learn and benefit from instruction in the law. They are seeking a *restored earthly* kingdom.[197] But for the writer of WS, there seemed to be an intentional break from the history of Israel and traditional wisdom-style solutions. "This book was clearly written when the times were out of joint, and the only real hope seemed either in the distant past, in the afterlife, or possibly at the eschatological Day of Judgment."[198] Per Collins, the WS can be divided into three main parts, the first of which he calls the "book of eschatology (1:1 - 6:21).[199] Collins notes that in WS, there is an apocalyptic influence as seen in that "the hope of the righteous is full of immortality."[200] He attributes this to the setting he has determined for the work,

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[196] Tuttle, 214.

[197] John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age,* The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 54. Italics added; *Wisdom of Ben Sira,* Sirach 36:1-2, 10, 13. Collins writes, "Like Proverbs, Sirach envisages wisdom as more than a matter of instruction and practical advice . . . it forms a bridge between humanity and God . . . When Sirach identifies wisdom and the law, however, he is in effect introducing the Torah of Moses into the wisdom school, and thereby attempting to combine two educational traditions." Collins also characterizes Ben Sira as exhibiting a "lack of eschatological concern [as] is typical of the biblical wisdom tradition. Eschatology is equally absent from Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth. In Sirach 36:1-2, God is called on to judge the nations: "Come to our aid, God of the universe, and put all the nations in dread of you!" This, however, is to restore the glory of the kingdom of Israel, as is seen in Sirach 36:10: "Gather all the tribes of Jacob, that they may inherit the land as in days of old."

[198] Witherington, 100.

[199] J. J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom,* 179.

[200] J. J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom,* 183.

i.e. two centuries after Sirach, saying "Belief in retribution after death had become much more widespread in Judaism in the interim. This belief was initially formulated in the apocalyptic writings attributed to Enoch and Daniel. The judgment scene in Wis. Sol. Chapter 5 is couched in apocalyptic idiom."[201]

The change from a traditional sapiential viewpoint to one that becomes less materialistic and more focused on the life to come is seen in Jesus's words in the SM, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt 5:11-12). As Goldingay states, "Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with a prophetic summary of the dynamics of life with God (Mt 5:3-11). He tells people that it is all right to be crushed and to be longing for God's righteous purpose to be fulfilled. God is going to respond to that longing."[202]

Discussing the conclusion to the SM and what he calls its "fitting tripartite ending consisting of three metaphors"[203] that call for a decision by disciples to choose the way in which to live their lives, Pennington says, "It is appropriate that Jesus gives these

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[201] J. J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom,* 184, 186-187. Collins notes the references to immortality: "The noun 'immortality' (*athanasia*) occurs five times in Wis. Sol. (3:4; 4:1; 8:13, 17; 15:3) and adjective *athanatos* once 1:14)." He does say that in 4:1 and 8:13 it is associated with memory, and presumably refers to an undying reputation (not unlike Ben Sira, in which any inkling of immorality is related to one's name or reputation lasting beyond one's life). (186) Collins also notes another related term, "incorruption" (*aphtharsia*) that "appears three times, in Wis. 2:23; 6:18, and 6:19, and the corresponding adjective twice, in Wis 12:1 and 18:4. This word had a technical sense in Epicurean philosophy. The Epicureans held that the gods had material existence, and they explained their unending life by saying that they were incorruptible. According to Wis. 2:23, humanity was created 'for incorruptibility.'" (186-187)

[202] Goldingay, 27.

[203] Pennington, *Sermon,* 269.

warnings at the end of the Sermon – because all of the discourse is framed in the context of eschatological urgency."[204]

> Unlike the merely proverbial wisdom appeal such as Solomon might give, based on inviting his son to reflect on the human outworking of one's choices, the One greater than Solomon who is both Sage and eschatological Prophet must appeal to *more* than human wisdom, to an eschatological, kingdom irruption. This is why the closing to the Sermon is peppered throughout with the sense of urgency and the high-stakes language of life versus destruction.[205]

The WS eschatological elements seem to have an affinity with the SM. "The Sermon may address ordinary circumstances, but it sees all through the eyes of eternity. It does not so much look forward, from the present to the consummation, as it looks backwards, from the consummation to the present . . . it proclaims the will of God as it should be lived in the kingdom, when God's will is done on earth as in heaven."[206]

The Two Ways

Like the wisdom teachers of the HB, Jesus's teaching in the SM lays out the choice of two ways to live. Most directly, this is seen as Jesus "concludes the Sermon on the Mount with a number of paired alternatives. He speaks of two paths (7:13f.), two trees (7:15-20), two claims (7:21-23), two houses (7:24-27). By these pairs he insists that there are two ways and only two."[207] Pennington notes the same thing saying, "As Jesus approaches the final part of his message, he uses these three metaphors to "provide three

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[204] Pennington, *Sermon,* 271.

[205] Pennington, *Sermon,* 271.

[206] Allison, 12-13.

[207] D.A. Carson, *Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: A Study of Matthew 5 – 10* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 161.

distinct images, yet they are tied together."[208] He continues by saying their bond occurs in three ways:

> First, consistent in all the metaphors is the difference between external appearance and internal reality, a theme at the heart of the Sermon. Second, there is a thematic thread of "two ways" that weaves its way through all three metaphors, including the idea that Jesus's hearers must be careful in their hearing and consider their responses to this teaching. Closely related to the second, the third way this passage hangs together is the consistent theme of "doing the will of God" as essential to entering the kingdom.[209]

As has been said from the beginning of this paper, this twofold principle should be borne in mind when reading any biblical literature. For example, this same concern in dealing with the right way to live is found in the Pentateuch as well as in Proverbs. "The choice between life and death which Moses dramatically places before Israel in Deut 30:15-30 is reechoed in the sages' emphasis on *life*. The life-death situation is expressed positively in the image of 'the tree of life.' Wisdom 'is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; fortunate are they who embrace her.' (Prov 3:18)"[210]

Tuttle also refers to the two ways to live in the SM saying, "The antithetical proverbs comparing the wicked and righteous form a complement to those treating the wise and foolish, and together they form what is called the '*doctrine of the two ways*.' Simply stated the doctrine is that wisdom compels righteousness, which leads to life, while foolishness leads to wickedness, which results in death."[211]

As Quarles points out while examining Mt 7:13-14,

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[208] Pennington, *Sermon,* 269. Again, I emphasize that this reference to the "external appearance and internal reality" is not at all in conflict with HB teaching. It was an emphasis reiterated in Jesus's teaching.

[209] Pennington, *Sermon,* 269.

[210] Murphy, *Tree,* ix.

[211] Tuttle, 217. Italics added.

> Jesus commanded His disciples to 'enter' (from *eiserchomai*) through the narrow gate. He typically used this same verb to describe entering the kingdom of heaven. The two expressions mean roughly the same . . .Thus the narrow gate probably marks the entrance into the kingdom and into life. The use of the aorist imperative *eiselthate* ('enter') stresses both the huge importance and great urgency of entering the kingdom.[212]

In Proverbs, we see exhortations to listen and learn: "Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many . . . ; keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life." (Prov 4:10, 13) This call to both the wise in the HB and of Jesus in the SM is to make a choice between the two ways to live. Tuttle notes, "As with Jesus' call, the objective is *knowledge of God and life itself*."[213]

The material in Mt 7:13-27 is described by France as being "incorporated in a far-reaching and memorable summary of the ethics of discipleship (the "greater righteousness" of 5:20), which thus serves to conclude the main body of the discourse: what follows in vv. 13–27 is *a coda calling for decisive response* rather than adding further instructions on the requirements of discipleship."[214] Assuming the "two paths" found in both HB and Second Temple wisdom teaching as the background to the SM, we

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[212] Quarles, 309.

[213] Tuttle, 215. Tuttle also notes another connection between Jesus's teaching to Proverbs - that even the use of the storm imagery in these verses as well as the house metaphor are also found in Proverbs, e.g. in Prov 1:26-27: "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, when panic strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you." Also "The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand." (Prov 12:7) I prefer and agree with the NET translation of Jesus's instructions in Mt 11:15 of ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκουέτω (or, similarly that of εἴ τις ἔχει ὦτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω in Mk 4:23) as "In anyone has ears to hear, he *had better listen!*" (Italics added.) In the NET notes on Mt 11:15 (p. 1814nF), it states, "The translation 'had better listen!' captures the force of the third person imperative more effectively than the traditional 'let him hear,' which sounds more like a permissive than an imperative to the modern English reader. This was Jesus' common expression to listen and heed carefully." Italics added.

[214] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 282. Logos. Italics added.

will now take a look at how this approach is displayed through the μακάριος formula in the Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes

The Macarism and Human Flourishing

> After ascending the mountainside (or hillside), Jesus begins his sermon
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> > . . . with a series of nine statements that each begin with the Greek word *makarios* (here in the plural form, *makarioi*) . . . A more technical literary term than "Beatitudes" is *macarism* . . . A macarism is a *makarios* statement that ascribes happiness or flourishing to a particular person or state. A macarism is a pronouncement, based on observation, that a certain way of being in the world produces human flourishing and felicity.[215]

Busto Saiz similarly says a macarism is "a statement about a person who for some reason – current or upcoming – is exalted or whose condition is affirmed as desirable."[216] Busto Saiz lists four elements to a macarism: 1) the Hebrew term אַשְׁרֵי normally translated into Greek by μακάριος; 2) the subject whose condition is affirmed as enviable; 3) the remote cause of happiness, which is frequently the virtuous attitude of the subject; and 4) the proximate cause of happiness, which

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[215] Pennington, *Sermon,* 42. Pennington here explains the derivation of the word "beatitude" as follows: "These have been called the "Beatitudes" in the English tradition by way of a transliteration of the Latin translation of *makarios* – *beatus*, which means "happy, blissful, fortunate, or flourishing."

[216] José Ramón Busto Saiz, "Macarismos desarrollados: un tipo de poema sapiencial," in *Simposio Biblico Español,* edited by N. Fernandez Marcos, J. Trebolle Barrera, and J. Fernandez Vallina, 345-356. Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1984. [English translation: "Developed Macarisms: A Type of Wisdom Poem."] Busto Saiz also says that this is the inverse of an imprecation in intent. Note: I contacted a local translation company to translate this article, but I was told I would need permission from Universidad Complutense to do this. I was able to gain permission for the translation of this publication from Universidad Complutense in Madrid, but I was advised to obtain permission from the author himself as well. Despite several different attempts to contact the author in different ways, I was unable to do so. I have depended on Google translate app for this translation, and any errors in translation are unintentional.

can be introduced by כִּי (Gr: ὅτι/γὰρ),"[217] although he admits to variations. Similar to the principle of Busto Saiz's second element above, Pennington says, "The Hebrew *'ašrê* [אַשְׁרֵי] is an abstract noun that always occurs as a construct intensive. This means that it is always followed by and connected with the *who* being described as *'ašrê*: ' *'ašrê* is the one who . . .[218]

Busto Saiz states that "after the book of Psalms, it is the wisdom books that most frequently present examples of macarisms."[219] Pennington says something similar: "*'Ašrê* is found especially in the Psalms and Proverbs. It is particularly appropriate there because it is a poetic and wisdom-related word. *'Ašrê* describes the happy state of the one who lives wisely. In this sense it is closely related to *šālôm.*"[220] It is such a determination that adds to my contention that Jesus is a wisdom teacher in the tradition of the wisdom sages of the HB.

Regarding the word μακάριος and its translation, McKnight says, "The meaning of *blessed* is a blessed problem."[221] It is no small thing to determine how to translate this word into English. Commenting on the SM, McKnight says, "But on this one word the entire passage stands and from this one word the whole list

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[217] Busto Saiz, 347. In the fourth element, he speaks of items that are proximate causes and are introduced by כִּי (Gr: ὅτι/γὰρ); I would add אֲשֶׁר, as seen in Ps 1:3.

[218] Pennington, *Sermon,* 43. TWOT lists the root of this word as " אָשַׁר (*ʾāšar*) *to go (straight), walk.*"

[219] Busto Saiz, 348. He adds that "the macarisms that we find in the wisdom books are not literary forms *per se,* but expressive formulas that serve a broader context," listing WS 3:13-14 as an example. The RSV translates these verses as follows: [13] . . . For blessed is the barren woman who is undefiled, who has not entered into a sinful union; she will have fruit when God examines souls. Blessed also is the eunuch whose hands have done no lawless deed, and who has not devised wicked things against the Lord; for special favor will be shown him for his faithfulness, and a place of great delight in the temple of the Lord.

[220] Pennington, *Sermon,* 44.

[221] Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount,* The Story of God Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 31. Kindle.

hangs. Get this word right, the rest falls into place; get it wrong, and the whole thing falls apart. We need to drill down to get it right."[222]

Pennington rightly and succinctly states that "the Old Testament cares about human flourishing."[223] He notes that in the Bible, "there is one meta-concept that appears with remarkable tenacity and consistency across times and worldviews . . . This idea or theme can be identified as *human flourishing.*"[224] His explanation for the ubiquity of this idea is that "Human flourishing alone is the idea that encompasses all human activity and goals because there is nothing so natural and inescapable as the desire to live, and to live in peace, security, love, health, and happiness."[225] His contention is that "all human behavior, when analyzed deeply enough, will be found to be motivated by the desire for life and flourish, individually and corporately."[226]

With all of the above as essential background, it becomes clear that the word *makarios* is more than just a variety of random pronouncements of divine blessing. "Rather, continuing in the *'ašrê* wisdom tradition, Jesus begins his public ministry by painting a picture of what the state of true God-centered human flourishing looks like. He is making an appeal and casting an inspiring vision,

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[222] McKnight, 32.

[223] Pennington, *Sermon,* 43.

[224] Jonathan T. Pennington, "A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing," Institute for Faith, Work & Economics (blog), 2015, 1. https://tifwe.org/resource/a-biblical-theology-of-human-flourishing-2/. For the purpose of this paper, I have assigned page numbers as they occurred in the downloaded .pdf version of this blog article.

[225] Pennington, "A Biblical Theology," 1-2.

[226] Pennington, "A Biblical Theology," 2.

even as the Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah do, for what true well-being looks like in God's coming kingdom."[227]

Blessedness: אַשְׁרֵי, and μακάριος

Along with Pennington, I prefer to use the English translation of these words as "flourishing." While not entirely satisfactory, it perhaps comes the closest to what I believe is being expressed and discussed in this paper. This is, as Pennington would say, "an English [language] problem," in that we have no direct, satisfactory equivalent.[228]

In a desire to avoid being a prime example of wielding one of the sixteen kinds of word-study fallacies mentioned by Carson,[229] I have attempted *not* to make facile translations into English by delving deeper simply into the words *ashre* (אַשָּׁרֵי) and *makarios* (μακάριος).[230] Free and loose translations may ignore "the complexities and

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[227] Pennington, *Sermon,* 47.

[228] Jonathan T. Pennington, "Matthew 5-7," November 30, 2022, in *The Two* Testaments, hosted by Rony Kozman and Will Kynes, podcast, https://thetwotestaments.com/matthew-5-7-with-dr-jonathan-pennington/; V.P. Hamilton, אָשַׁר in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, eds. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., and B. K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 80, Logos.

An initial examination of the Hebrew word yields this from the TWOT: To be "blessed" (*ašrê*), man has to do something. Usually this is something positive. A "blessed" man, for example, is one who *trusts in God without equivocation*: Ps 2:12; 34:8 . . . A "blessed" man is one who comes under the authority of God's revelation: his Torah, Ps 119:1; 1:2; Prov 29:18; his word, Prov 16:20; his commandment, Ps 112:1; his testimony, Ps 119:2; his way, Ps 128:1; Prov 8:32. The man who is beneficent to the poor is blessed (Ps 41:1 [H 2]); Prov 14:21). Note the negative approach of Ps 1, "blessed is the man who does not." He isolates himself and shuns the company of certain people, the ungodly.[228] Italics added.

[229] D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Carlisle, U.K.; Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster; Baker Books, 1996), 27-63. Logos.

[230] V. P. Hamilton, "אָשַׁר," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, eds. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., and B. K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 80, Logos. The verbal root from which this word derives,אָשַׁר, contains this note stating, in the "Piel it is used eleven times with several nuances of which the most prominent is to bless, called blessed.'"

nuances [that] are orders of magnitude greater when attempting to translate large and abstract concepts such as happiness (≈ *makarios*) . . .”[231]

On the English translation of the word *makarios,* Pennington notes: “My brief survey of various English translations reveals that nearly all render *makarios* as ‘blessed,’ probably due to the heavy influence of the King James Version, with but a few exceptions rendering it ‘Happy,’ . . .”[232] Pennington finds the SM “rid[ing] on a track of two conceptual rails . . . These rails are summed up in two Greek words: *makarios* and *teleios.*”[233]

When thinking about the Greek equivalent to *‘ašrê, makarios,* “one must recognize that not only the normal daily usage of the speaker is at play but also the deep and prominent influence of the Jewish heritage as manifested in the Septuagint.”[234] Pennington points out that “*‘ašrê* in the Septuagint is always rendered as *makarios.*”[235] Pennington explains that in the HB, the way this concept is most often portrayed is the idea of *šālôm.* He continues, “In the

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[231] Pennington, *Sermon,* 41.

[232] Pennington, *Sermon,* 43. For a list of some of the ways I have found the word *makarios* to be translated into English, see Appendix A.

[233] Pennington, *Sermon,* 41.

[234] Pennington, *Sermon,* 45.

[235] Pennington, *Sermon,* 46. He also notes that “When one considers the dual context [contemporary usage and LXX Jewish background] for the frequent occurrence of *makarios* in the New Testament, we see how the *‘ašrê* (and *šālôm*) tradition of human flourishing continues. The continuation is striking in two ways. First, the translational relationship between *‘ašrê* and *makarios* is quite exceptional. That is, very rarely in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible does one find a close one-to-one correspondence of terms and ideas . . . *‘ašrê* in the Septuagint is always rendered as *makarios* . . . [Second], *makarios* is often used as a synonym for the essential Greek philosophical term *eudaimonia* . . . which connotes inner happiness and satisfaction, the state of the truly good life or human flourishing.”

Hebrew Bible an important idea that along with *šālôm* communicates human flourishing is the word *'ašrê.*"[236]

As mentioned earlier, the scope of this paper does not allow me to examine the word *teleios* nor to allow an examination of the philosophical underpinning found by Pennington. Pennington continues, after the statement on the two conceptual rails of *makarios* and *teleios*, "There is no good, single gloss in English that communicates the complexity, beauty, and nuance of these weighty words."[237]

Pennington believes the SM is "Christianity's answer to the greatest metaphysical question that humanity has always faced – *How can we experience true human flourishing?* What is happiness, blessedness, *šālôm,* and how does one obtain and sustain it?"[238] Another way I would suggest asking about these is: "What is the right path to life and flourishing?"

In this section on wisdom in the teachings of Jesus, I spoke of Jesus as the ultimate sage and mentioned ways that his teaching was similar to that of the HB and Second Temple wisdom literature. While examining Jesus's eschatological trajectory, I found both a sense of urgency in his teaching along with an additional element of authority since Jesus was both the author of and the medium through which his message was transmitted. Both Jesus's teaching and the earlier wisdom tradition that it reflects "endeavor to do nothing less than to transform a life that is predisposed by its sin nature

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[236] Pennington, *Sermon,* 43.

[237] Pennington, *Sermon,* 41.

[238] Pennington, *Sermon,* 14.

toward folly into a life directed by and toward godly wisdom."[239] These teachings are not only for the individuals that make up the people of God but moving forward chronologically are "necessary both to the revitalization of the church and to the effectiveness of the church's mission in the world,"[240] as I will expand on below.

[239] Estes, "Proverbs," 380.

[240] Quarles, 3.

Chapter 5

Application for the People of God

The People of God: Who Are They?

As stated in the abstract, one of the intentions for this work is to use a biblical theological approach to analyze and synthesize scriptural teaching about the rewards of wise living as it benefits the community of the people of God, seen by the results of living wisely. It is the desire to show the community benefits of what has been discussed above that is being highlighted in this section.

It is my belief that the people of God are one; that is, there is a continuity between Israel and the church.[241] As mentioned in my introduction, I am looking at OT Israel and the NT church as "somewhat distinct . . . in order then to perceive the *essential continuity* between that Israel and the NT congregation."[242] Regarding these similarities and differences, Williams helpfully states,

> The church does not replace Israel, nor is it simply identical. Some new historical and redemptive development has forever transformed and redefined the people of God. That development is the incarnation and work of Christ the Messiah. Since Jesus becomes the new covenant representative, himself the true Israel, the people of God are constituted as such in relationship to him.[243]

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[241] When I use the word "Israel," I see a distinction between all those who were *merely* descendants of Abraham, identified as part of the covenant community, and those descendants who trusted in and sought Yahweh. I see Paul's words in view here, "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring . . ." (Rom 9:6-7) When I speak of the church, I also believe Scripture teaches that there are those who may be identified as being among the covenant community but who are not part of the elect. I believe this is partially what Paul is addressing when he says, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves." (2 Cor 13:5)

[242] Woudstra, 221. Italics added.

[243] Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 251-252.

There *are* some distinctions, and "a full Trinitarian approach [to the biblical doctrine of the church] serves best,"[244] as Clowney says. He continues, "In the history of revelation, the Old Testament people of God become the church of the Messiah, formed as the fellowship of the Spirit."[245] Clowney uses an appreciated horticultural metaphor: "The new grows out of the old, as the flower opens from the bud. The coming of the Spirit fulfils the promise to Abraham, and makes the Gentiles Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:14, 29)."[246] Murray states:

> When Jesus speaks of 'my church', he is thinking of those gathered and knit together after the pattern provided by the Old Testament as the people for his possession, as the community which he is to constitute, and which stands in a relation to him comparable to the congregation of the Lord in the Old Testament.[247]

"It is clear that one of the Bible's chief claims is that God is shaping a people for himself. This intention is captured among other ways in the often-repeated covenant formula 'I will be your God and you shall be my people.'"[248] The wisdom enterprise can be seen as part of that shaping process that is enhanced in the NT by the fuller power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Is simply having a people for himself the sole reason the Lord has revealed for the creation and formation of such a body, or is there another purpose? After identifying

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[244] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church,* Contours of Christian Theology, gen. ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 29.

[245] Clowney, 29.

[246] Clowney, 29. The horticultural metaphor also recalls Paul's discussion of Israel and the Church with the Church pictured as "a wild olive shoot [that were] grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree." (Rom 11:27)

[247] John Murray, "The Nature and Unity of the Church," in *Collected Writings of John Murray,* Vol. 2 (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 2:323.

[248] Elmer A. Martens, "The People of God," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity,* eds. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 225.

what I believe is meant by the people of God, the next question to address is: What is it that God has revealed in his word that he is has been intending to do with this people? The story of purpose could begin in the garden with Adam and Eve as God's first image-bearers. "As the one creature called and empowered to bear the image of God within creation, Adam, the human being, is to mediate God's rule to creation."[249] While a lengthy exploration of this theme is beyond the scope of this paper, God's initial instructions to them reveal his intention: they should "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it . . ." (Gen 1:28)[250] They were to expand their own relationship to the Creator to the ends of the earth.

However, the purpose of Yahweh for his people that I am wishing to highlight here is most explicit in his covenant with Abraham: " . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12:3)[251] The LORD himself says regarding Abraham, "For I have chosen him *that* he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring Abraham what he has promised him." (Gen 18:19) This purpose carries over into

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[249] Williams, 50.

[250] These instructions are repeated in Genesis after the flood (Gen 9:7) and the dispersal of the human race is forced upon them after the Tower of Babel incident (Gen 11:9).

[251] I acknowledge that there is some disagreement with the translation of the Hebrew here. The UBS Handbook [William D. Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies, 1998] says, "Theoretically the Niphal can be translated either as passive or reflexive/reciprocal. (The Niphal of 'bless' is only used in formulations of the Abrahamic covenant. See Gen 12:2; 18:18; 28:14.) Traditionally the verb is taken as passive here, as if Abram were going to be a channel or source of blessing. But in later formulations of the Abrahamic covenant (see Gen 22:18; 26:4) the Hitpael replaces this Niphal form, suggesting a translation 'will bless' [i.e., "pronounce blessings on"] themselves [or "one another"]. The Hitpael of 'bless' is used with a reflexive/reciprocal sense in Deut 29:18; Ps 72:17; Isa 65:16; Jer 4:2. Gen 12:2 predicts that Abram will be held up as a paradigm of divine blessing and that people will use his name in their blessing formulae. For examples of blessing formulae utilizing an individual as an example of blessing see Gen 48:20 and Ruth 4:11."[251] I prefer the traditional translation.

the NT when Paul says that his calling was "to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of [Christ's] name among all the nations (Rom 1:5; 16:26) Abraham is the model of faith and obedience, and "the horizon of 'all the nations' goes back to God's promise to Abraham that through him all the nations on earth will be blessed."[252] As Collins describes it, God is ". . . preserving and shaping them for his purposes, particularly that they might be a fit vehicle of blessing to the world."[253] Wright says that the Abrahamic covenant was ". . . God's own agenda for saving the world. God's promise to Abraham was in short, the gospel."[254]

Wisdom as Skill in Godly Living

Having now established the identity and mission of God's people, *how* is it that they are to bring about being a blessing to the nations, and what is its correlation to biblical wisdom instruction? Wright returns to Gen. 18:19 to explain that in this verse, we see "*election, ethics* and *mission* all in one verse . . . These three great biblical themes are inseparable – integrally intertwined with each other."[255] He explains that the mission of God's people is "to be the community who live by the ethical standards of the ways of God, so that God can fulfill his promise to Abraham and bring about the blessing of the

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[252] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission,* Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 63.

[253] C. J. Collins, "New Covenant," 68.

[254] Wright, 63-64.

[255] Wright, 82.

nations. Our ethics and God's mission are integrally bound together. That is why God chose us in the first place."[256]

One way to approach these ethical standards for God's covenant community is to see that his people were instructed to walk in the way of the LORD in the wisdom writings of the HB. "A crucial notion of 'wisdom' (Hebrew *khokmâ*) is that of 'skill' (the nuance of *khokmâ* in Exod. 28:3), particularly skill in choosing the right path for the desired result."[257] Collins here sees a covenantal framework that "defines what is proper in both the path and the result [that] we may call this 'covenantal wisdom': skill in the art of godly living."[258]

Proverbs, Kidner says, is a "book [that] belongs to the covenant people . . ."[259] Because it might be seen as a kind of instruction manual for dwelling in right relationship with God and with each other, the importance of the divine-human covenantal relationship is foundational and is seen in Proverbs 3:6 "In all your ways acknowledge [Yahweh], and he will make straight your paths." In this verse, we are directed to the LORD for light and wisdom. Kidner tells us, ". . . .We are reminded of the goal of the new covenant itself ('they shall all know me'), for 'the upright are in his confidence' (3:32), i.e. his *sōd*, his intimate circle."[260] And by walking as the upright, the people will become salt and light to the world. Jesus, as wisdom teacher, tells his followers, "In the

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[256] Wright, 83.

[257] C. J. Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System,": 14.

[258] C. J. Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System,": 14.

[259] Kidner, 17:31.

[260] Kidner, 17:31.

same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matt 5:16)

We are continually drawn back to the two paths laid out in wisdom literature and especially in Proverbs, which "is concerned to point out what is right and what pays may travel long distances together; but it leaves us in no doubt which we are to follow when their paths diverge."[261] This is not a simply pragmatic instruction to be followed by anyone; "you have to be *godly* to be wise; and this is not because godliness pays, but because the only wisdom by which you can handle everyday things in conformity with their nature is *the wisdom by which they were divinely made and ordered*."[262]

In the midst of a broken world and broken people, how do the people of God find right relationship and the *shalom* that is the fruit of being in God's kingdom?

Plantinga writes:

> The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call *shalom* . . . In the Bible, shalom means *universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight* – a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is **the way things ought to be**.[263]

In God's kingdom, the once weeping world will flourish. Plantinga puts it this way:

> People would work in peace and work to fruitful effect. Lambs could lie down with lions.[264] All nature would be fruitful, benign, and filled with

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[261] Kidner, 17:30.

[262] Kidner, 17:30. Italics added.

[263] Plantinga, 10. Bolding added. I owe a debt to Plantinga for much of my thought and development of *shalom* as the "way things should be."

[264] I note that the Isaiah passage being alluded to here speaks of wolves dwelling together with lambs and not the often-referenced lambs with lions. Isaiah 11:6 – "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the

> wonder upon wonder; all humans would be knit together in brotherhood and sisterhood; and all nature and all humans would look to God, walk with God, lean toward God, and delight in God.[265]

When we look at Proverbs as a part of the entirety of Scripture, we see that wisdom "makes sense of Israel, and it makes sense of Jesus. It enlists you and me to live loyally toward God, to like what he likes, and to embrace our place in the community of his faithful, the community that is a place where together we aspire to be good and also provide safety for those who aren't very good at being good."[266]

It is in the context of the "already and not yet" kingdom that Jesus presented his Sermon on the Mount, beginning with the Beatitudes. "The Beatitudes pour gasoline on our contemporary ideals – and then light a match…[They] dig beneath the surface, exposing what we really need to value and practice . . . By excavating the attachments of our soul, the Beatitudes reveal the pernicious lies we have internalized while simultaneously portraying the life God intends for his people."[267]

I conclude with this summary: "The Sermon's answer to the human-flourishing question is that true human flourishing is only available through communion with the Father God through his revealed Son, Jesus, as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. This flourishing is only experienced through faithful, heart-deep, whole-person discipleship, following Jesus's teachings and life, which situate the disciple into God's

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leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them."

[265] Plantinga, 10.

[266] C. John Collins, "Genre Has Run Its Course: Let the Word Retire in Peace," *Sapienta* (April 2017), http://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2017/04/genre-has-run-its-course-let-the-word-retire-in-peace/

[267] Chris Castaldo, *The Upside Down Kingdom: Wisdom for Life from the Beatitudes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), 3.

community or kingdom."[268] It is my deepest desire that as God's people, we would be granted the grace and wisdom to walk well, choosing the right path, and thereby glorify God in our lives individually and as the people of God.

[268] Pennington, 14-15.

Appendix A

English Translations for μακάριος in Mt 5:3-10

[3] Flourishing are the poor in spirit because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
[4] Flourishing are the mourners because they will be comforted.
[5] Flourishing are the humble because they will inherit the world.
[6] Flourishing are the ones hungering and thirsting for righteousness because they will be satisfied.
[7] Flourishing are the merciful because they will be given mercy.
[8] Flourishing are the pure in heart because they will see God.
[9] Flourishing are the peacemakers because they will be called the children of God.

Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017)

[3] God blesses the beggars in spirit because there is Heavens' Empire.
[4] God blesses the grievers because they will be consoled.
[5] God blesses the meek because they will inherit the land.
[6] God blesses the ones hungering and thirsting for the rightness because they will be satisfied.
[7] God blesses the compassionate because they will be shown compassion.
[8] God blesses the clean in the heart because they will see God.
[9] God blesses the peacemakers because they will be called 'God's descendants.'

Scot McKnight, *The Second Testament: A New Translation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023.

[3] Creator's blessing rests on the poor, the ones with broken spirits. The good road from above is theirs to walk.
[4] Creator's blessing rests on the ones who walk a trail of tears, for he will wipe the tears from their eyes and comfort them.
[5] Creator's blessing rests on the ones who walk softly and in a humble manner. The earth, land, and sky will welcome them and always be their home.
[6] Creator's blessing rests on the ones who hunger and thirst for wrongs to be made right again. They will eat and drink until they are full.
[7] Creator's blessing rests on the ones who are merciful and kind to others. Their kindness will find its way back to them – full circle.
[8] Creator's blessing rests on the pure of heart. They are the ones who will see the Great Spirit.
[9] Creator's blessing rests on the ones who make peace. It will be said of them, 'They are the children of the Great Spirit!'

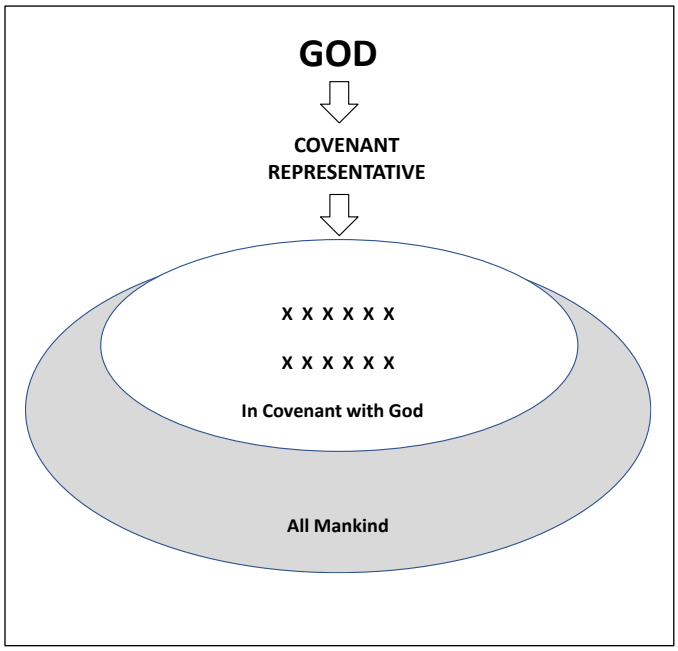
First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021.
[3] God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
[4] God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
[5] God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.
[6] God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.
[7] God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
[8] God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.
[9] God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

New Living Translation

[3] Happy are the poor in spirit: for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
[4] Happy are those who are sad: for they will be comforted.
[5] Happy are the gentle: for the earth will be their heritage.
[6] Happy are those whose heart's desire is for righteousness: for they will have their desire.
[7] Happy are those who have mercy: for they will be given mercy.
[8] Happy are the clean in heart: for they will see God.
[9] Happy are the peacemakers: for they will be named sons of God.

The Bible in Basic English

Appendix B



The People of God

Diagram adapted from C. John Collins, "Redemptive History and the People of God," for use in OT Psalms and Wisdom Literature, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO. Any misrepresentation of his work and intentions are solely my responsibility.

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