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Wisdom City:

Towards a Political Reading of the Wisdom Genre

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THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY THESIS ABSTRACT

The contemporary conversation surrounding the wisdom genre shows a lack of consensus regarding the origin, nature, and biblical use of wisdom. This situation can be improved through reading the biblical wisdom genre politically, revealing the principles that create and sustain a God-fearing society. The hermeneutical key to accomplish this task begins with the claim that the book of Proverbs presents itself as a 'city in a book.' The outline of Proverbs, especially via the first nine chapters, introduces coherence between the concept of wisdom and an archetypal city. Second, the book provides a transformative engine, which can be found in the interplay between Proverbs chapters 1-9 (the prologue) and chapters 10-31 (the wisdom collection). Proverbs chapters 10-31, through its transformative and performative rhetoric, seeks to manifest the city ideal found in chapters 1-9. This mechanism creates a hermeneutical model by providing strategies and patterns for reading wisdom throughout the rest of Scripture. A popular academic slogan observes that the biblical narrative begins with a garden yet concludes with the establishment of a city. This intriguing observation invites the reader into the complexity of the text from beginning to end. But it also posits a significant question: What transforms the garden into the city? This dissertation will answer that question with one word: wisdom.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Topic Introduction

"Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks…" (Prov. 1:20-21, English Standard Version). The invitation of wisdom from the book of Proverbs suggests that political life is an integral part of the narrative of Scripture.[1] But how does it present such a topic? To what extent? Does it possess a related discourse and vocabulary? Does it speak with eloquence and purpose on political matters?

The scope of the political as used in this dissertation should not be limited to a conventional understanding in the sense of a political campaign, local election, a particular political office, a form of government (such as monarchy vs. democracy), or an ideology. Rather, when the term polity or political is mentioned, it is done broadly and archetypally. The term involves an examination of an organized society or civilization. It involves a systematic and totalizing approach that seeks to explain all the aspects of a polity in relation to each other. In this sense, relevant questions asked in historical or political study might be: "What is the ideal city?" or "What is the good city?" The answer of this dissertation will be given within the context of Biblical exposition, wherein the topic of wisdom from Scripture itself will be examined for its contribution to understanding the nature and inner connections of such a polity.

Discussions of cities, covenants, laws, kingdoms, assemblies, and elders can all rightfully be found throughout Scripture. However, the best answer to 'how' the Bible approaches political matters, broadly speaking, is to be found centrally located in the claims, themes, precepts, and theology of wisdom across the canon. Wisdom as a container, therefore, is the best candidate for

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[1] The title of this dissertation was inspired by the words of Proverbs 1:20-21.

a formal exposition of polity in Scripture.[2] Unlike other works of political thought, such as lengthy essay-styled political treatises, Scripture reveals such ideas through narrative, poetry, and discourse. It speaks of the literal and figurative through complex genres, literary structures, and canonical patterns, all of which will be explored in this dissertation.

The remainder of this introductory chapter explores the greater conversation of scholarship around the wisdom genre and political themes, emphasizing the current lack of consensus. By contrast, this dissertation will introduce a thesis and methodology offered to advance scholarship toward a better view of the wisdom genre.

Statement of The Problem

With the introduction of the topic in mind, the question becomes more focused. The reader may ask: "What is the particular method or approach for discussing political topics in Scripture?" In attempting to answer this question, an immediate problem becomes apparent: there is no consensus amidst the complexity of either past or present scholarship on the matter. The question of a political reading is encased in a much greater problem: a crisis regarding the very definition and existence of the wisdom genre.

On the one hand, some represent the skeptical approach. One scholar, Will Kynes, has even gone so far as to announce the death of the wisdom genre in an essay entitled *The 'Wisdom Literature' Category: An Obituary*.[3] Kynes' survey involves a critical examination of a hermeneutical approach to wisdom founded on the eisegesis of external reading ideologies,

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[2] This is not to say that political topics are not covered in other genres or sections in Scripture, but that wisdom has an especially useful concentration of political material helpful towards exposition.

[3] Will Kynes, "The 'Wisdom Literature' Category: An Obituary," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (2018): 1-24.

excessive ancient Near Eastern parallels, and the tenets of modern philosophy. It is no surprise

that consensus around the genre is at a low point. In another work, Kynes provides an apt

summary: "Biblical scholarship is currently suffering from a 'wisdom' category that is plagued

by definitional deficiency, amorphous social location, and hemorrhaging influence, among other

maladies."[4]

In contrast to those of a skeptical bent are scholars who accept the existence of a wisdom

genre yet promote a reductionistic viewpoint, often unwittingly. One example of such a well-

meaning exposition comes from David Hubbard, who summarizes wisdom in the following

manner: "Accordingly, wisdom in the ancient Orient and the Old Testament tends to emphasize

the success and *well-being of individuals*, their families, and their community. This *individualism*

contrasts with the prophets' marked emphasis on national and corporate religious life."[5]

Although Hubbard is not incorrect regarding his basic argument,[6] his interpretation showcases a

more individualized emphasis on wisdom at the expense of the political. Likewise, Sailhamer

presents a limited scope of reading when he argues, "The Scriptures as a whole thus are cast as

one thinks of wisdom literature. They are not so much for governing in the public square as they

are a means for individual piety."[7] His reading, along with that of other reductionists, may be an

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[4] Will Kynes, "The Modern Scholarly Wisdom Tradition and The Threat of Pan-Sapientialism: A Case Report," in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies, Society of Biblical Literature: Ancient Israel and Its Literature, No. 23*, ed. Mark Sneed (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 11.

[5] William Sanford La Sor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, *2nd ed.* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 458. This reference was discovered through the work of Grant Osborne: Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Rev. and expanded, 2nd ed.* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 247. Emphasis mine.

[6] According to the argument of this dissertation, the individual, ethical, and local dimensions are not excluded from wisdom, but are placed secondarily to the political.

[7] John Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 266.

example of the 'cultural gap' described by Fuhr and Köstenberger, which can serve as a significant expositional hurdle that needs to be overcome when approaching Scripture canonically and contextually.[8]

In addition to the skeptics and reductionists, stands the populist approach to the genre. Here, well-meaning readers tend to reduce wisdom to the merely aphoristic. Such an approach favors the occasional over the comprehensive and generally ignores the larger context of Scripture. Although using wisdom as a slogan is not without merit (after all, much wisdom content exhibits an intentional terseness towards the end of memorability), ultimately, such an approach negates the narrative and systematic aspects of wisdom. Paul Koptak captures this approach when he observes:

> This state of affairs shouldn't surprise us, for we are a society that loves sayings and aphorisms. Advertising and television comedies create the catch phrases that pepper our conversations; a day spent listening for the sayings that inundate and shape our lives would end up with quite a list! There is also a renewed interest in wisdom in our time, but often it takes the form of sentimental life lessons or management pep talk.[9]

Thesis Introduction

As previously introduced, exploring the topic at hand involves positively describing wisdom while simultaneously answering the concerns of those whose approach tends towards a diminution of the concept. Examining such matters constitutes this paper's contribution to the great conversation around wisdom amidst the currents of contemporary scholarship. This paper will therefore advance the following thesis:

> To be properly exposited, the biblical wisdom genre must be read politically, revealing the principles that create and sustain a God-fearing society.

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[8] Fuhr and Köstenberger, *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology*, 10.

[9] Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 19.

Writing towards this goal provides the opportunity to return to Job's words when he asks, "But where shall wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell" (Job 28:12)? Whatever answer is given, it must incorporate several important considerations. First, it must seek the whole of Scripture as a primary source. Second, it should define the wisdom genre exegetically without reading in external considerations (eisegesis).[10] Finally, it must highlight a unique center of wisdom that can provide a foundation for understanding the remainder of the genre.

The godly city or society, understood through a proper reading of wisdom, is not abstract but rather rooted in the historical narrative of Scripture. In particular, the reader should take note that as early as Deuteronomy 4, Israel is given a vision of a wisdom civilization, by which the nations would say: "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." Later manifestations of wisdom will echo this calling by demonstrating the canonical connections of wisdom, while also revealing both theological and practical implementations of the idea.

Survey of Research

As Richard Belcher has observed, "Wisdom literature is no longer the 'orphan child,' it was in the distant past. There has been an explosion in the interest in wisdom so that now many works are available to explain it."[11] However, finding consensus amongst such works remains a significant challenge, especially concerning a political approach. To make sense of the current conversation of scholarship and to provide a necessary background to the discussion surrounding the political nature of wisdom, four eras or 'turns' of scholarship will be briefly surveyed. Craig

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[10] It should be noted that this dissertation rejects Marxist, feminist, or other leftist ideological interpretations of the text. Rather, an exegetical approach will be favored, drawing forth a biblical theology of wisdom and city themes from the text itself.

[11] Richard P. Belcher Jr, *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 46, New Studies in Biblical Theology* (London; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2018), xiii.

Bartholomew has helpfully introduced these categories in his survey of biblical scholarship relating to the wisdom genre. The four sections are not merely chronological delimitations but are built upon the critical concept of a philosophical, theological, and hermeneutic turn. Each turn embodies a specific idea worked out by scholars who operated amidst a broad consensus of thought. Bartholomew cautions regarding these categories: "In terms of this framework, it is important to note that one turn does not obliterate (an) earlier one(s). Of necessity, they interact with and upon each other."[12] The four turns are presented as follows: (1) historical-critical, (2) literary, (3) postmodern, and (4) theological.[13]

Historical-Critical Turn

Although the historical-critical school sought to place the compositional pieces of various biblical texts into a historical context, their dissection and ultimate skepticism of Old Testament claims damaged their ability to see political and wisdom themes across books, sections, or the canon of Scripture. The historical-critical method has maintained a long-ranging life in biblical scholarship, starting in the 1800s.[14] Its foundations go back to the Enlightenment, emphasizing human rationality and materialism. As Köstenberger and Patterson observe, historical-critical

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[12] Craig G. Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson (London: Apollos, 2016), 4–5.

[13] Bartholomew visually presents these four categories in a helpful way showing their interrelationship:
Historical
   Literary
      Postmodern
      Theological
See Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom*, 4.

[14] Köstenberger and Patterson make a distinction between the historical-critical and historical-cultural models. The historical cultural model maintains balance by examining a text in its historical context. The historical-cultural view does not arbitrarily separate the historical from the literary, but rather affirms their complementary roles. See Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 81-122.

theory "…has been largely undergirded by an anti-supernatural bias that has consistently cast aspersions on the historicity of much of the biblical material."[15]

One of the significant weaknesses of the historical-critical turn is its tendency towards atomizing the text. The desire to find each biblical book's hidden sources made the theological and literary enterprise difficult since texts stitched together artificially tend not to produce unified themes or outlines. Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) was especially representative of this approach through his well-known breakdown of the Torah into constituent portions: J, E, D, and P.[16] Hummel critically assesses the legacy of Wellhausen and his relationship to wisdom scholarship within the historical-critical turn when he states:

> Because of the liberal prejudice, wisdom, at least until very recently, has always been very much a stepchild of historical-critical study, even at its most positive. Wellhausen almost completely ignored the wisdom books, clearly regarding them as late and secondary. Duhm developed this assumption more specifically in the light of evolutionary principles in a way that virtually became a tenet of 'critical orthodoxy.'[17]

According to Hummel, Wellhausen focused primarily on the Torah and prophets. Wisdom was understood to be a sort of after-effect of the kerygma of the prophets, creating a retribution-style rhetoric that would develop into the aphoristic language one can find in the book of Proverbs.[18] Bartholomew likewise concurs: "Consequently, the thorough application of the historical-critical method to historical Old Testament literature occurs earlier than it does to

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[15] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 82.

[16] Horace Hummel describes the significance of Wellhausen: "As is common, we have already mentioned the name 'Wellhausen' as a sort of summary symbol of the classical critical approach. One must remember that, in one sense, it is only a symbol, but it is an apt one. Wellhausen's accomplishment was not so much an original theory as it was a successful popularization, which 'sold' the theory to the vast majority of his contemporaries." See Horace D. Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh: An Introduction to the Origin, Purpose, and Meaning of the Old Testament*, *electronic ed.* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 20.

[17] Ibid., 391–392.

[18] Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh: An Introduction to the Origin, Purpose, and Meaning of the Old Testament*, 391-392.

wisdom literature."[19] Wellhausen's move to downplay the distinctiveness of wisdom and assign it to a later date was not unusual for proponents of the historical-critical turn.

One central figure from this turn who focused on wisdom, along with other biblical subjects, was Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932), considered the modern father of form criticism (relating to the investigation of the sources of a text). Although Gunkel's bias against divine authorship of Scripture was evident throughout his scholarship, he admitted the quality of the Biblical material, as John Currid explains, "Even the notorious higher critic Hermann Gunkel recognized this fact when he commented, 'How incomparably superior the Hebrew legend is to the Babylonian!'"[20] His work included creating a classification of Psalms, with a sub-focus on defining wisdom psalms. Bellinger, using Gunkel's approach, states that "…the perspective of the wisdom psalms is often reminiscent of Proverbs."[21]

One problem the historical-critical turn created, ironically, was its approach to history itself. Rather than considering the biblical text as a historical chronicle capturing discrete historical events, this perspective saw the Old and New Testaments' contents as products of a historical age. The text's original, distinct, and historical claims were oddly distorted and eviscerated. Köstenberger and Patterson describe the reaction in scholarship that came about as a result: "In due course, this one-sided preoccupation with history led to widespread disillusionment with the historical-critical method."[22]

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[19] Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, 3.

[20] John D. Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 22.

[21] W. H. Bellinger, *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 20.

[22] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 560.

Another vital facet of the historical-critical school is its tendency towards evolutionary assumptions regarding the text. As Darwinism began to sweep through the academy in the 19th and 20th centuries, the progression from primitive to complex became a trope or lens through which to interpret data in any field, whether psychology, sociology, or the study of religion. In regard to the Old Testament, many phenomena presented in the text (such as collected wisdom) could not be taken at face value due to their complexity. Instead, the religion of the Old Testament must have started in a primitive manner (as in the Yahwist's religion or "J" of Wellhausen). A simple cult of spirituality would become more complex over time, as evolutionary biology suggested by analogy. Eventually, such rudimentary forms of belief would spiral into establishments with temples, priests, and sages. Likewise, wisdom or wisdom literature could not be complex, foundational, or significant in an early stage of Old Testament development; such characteristics must be explained as late developments.

<div align="center">The Literary Turn</div>

The literary turn seeks to make up for the insufficiencies of the historical-critical model. Not only is this generally true, but specifically, the literary turn provides an essential pivot for understanding the unified aims of wisdom literature. One of the significant problems with the first turn is that it tended to divide the text. The historical-critical model broke apart the text into sources, multiple authorships, and provenances. Because of this, the possibility of finding the unity of the text mainly became, mostly, if not completely lost. The literary turn, however, sought (and seeks) to correct this excess by returning to each work of wisdom in its final form, considering the unity of the text.

Due to such shortcomings of the historical-critical model, the literary turn sought to understand each book of Scripture again on its terms. The unity of the text became paramount,

with its implicit and explicit focus on the literary nature, devices, and structures of each work. This turn moved the academy towards a more Christian and evangelical reading of Scripture because of its emphasis on understanding the complexities of the final form. However, in some ways, the literary turn made the same mistake as the historical-critical approach because it emphasized certain aspects of the text against others. In particular, historical issues and questions became mainly, if not wholly, unimportant. For many, the text's final form became all that mattered. This claim should be understood in a general way, for a variety of scholarly approaches function under the idea of the 'literary,' some more friendly to the historical context than others.

Recent works positively contribute to a literary approach to Scripture, particularly wisdom studies. In *Proverbs 1-9 as an Introduction to the Book of Proverbs,*[23] Arthur Keefer writes on the literary nature and functioning of Proverbs 1-9 as it relates to the rest of the book (Keefer's arguments will be examined in Ch. 3). Marcia Falk offers a poetic and literary reading of the Song of Solomon in her work *The Song of Songs: Love Lyrics from the Bible*.[24] She treats the Song as an anthology of smaller poems with complementary themes. Finally, Robert S. Fyall, writing on Job in his work *Now My Eyes Have Seen You,*[25] traces various literary themes of the book, particularly examining Behemoth and Leviathan and their relationship to the key ideas of death and Satan. Although many other works can be mentioned, the key texts above provide solid examples of the literary turn in wisdom scholarship. In addition to these, Bartholomew also

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[23] Arthur J. Keefer, *Proverbs 1-9 as an Introduction to the Book of Proverbs, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 701* (London, Oxford; New York, NY; T&T Clark, 2020).

[24] Marcia Falk, ed., *The Song of Songs: Love Lyrics from the Bible* (Waltham, MA: Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press; University Press of New England, 2004).

[25] Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job, New Studies in Biblical Theology 12* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2002).

mentions Robert Alter's contributions to a greater understanding of Old Testament poetry[26] and

the groundbreaking work of Mier Sternberg in *The Poetics of Hebrew Narrative*.[27] Although

these last two authors did not specialize in wisdom per se, they provided complementary insights

for understanding wisdom literature.

The literary turn was a definite improvement over the historical-critical. It changed the

nature of the academic conversation by moving to greater recognition of the text as a significant

artistic effort with an essential unity. But as with the historical-critical method, it also lacks a

complete hermeneutic, as Köstenberger and Patterson explain (emphasis added):

> For this reason, the literary study of Scripture, while a legitimate part of biblical
> interpretation, must be grounded in historical study. Scripture should be seen not merely
> as a human witness or autonomous entity but as inspired, historically grounded divine
> revelation. *Thus, we have argued that history, language, and theology form a
> hermeneutical triad, with theology at the apex*.[28]

The Postmodern Turn

Francis Schaeffer's interpretation of the arc of philosophical history suggests that man-

centered philosophy is destined to unravel without the input of the Christian worldview.

Schaeffer detailed this argument in his famous work *How Should We Then Live?* The arrival of

Postmodernism for Schaeffer came as no surprise. [29] Schaeffer describes such a breakdown of

philosophy as an artifact of the post-Christian mind. He cogently asks, "The problem, however,

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

[27] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature 453* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996).

[28] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 561.

[29] Some scholars consider postmodernism to be late-stage modernism rather than a separate movement.

is not only in language but in reality: What will unify and give meaning to everything?"[30] Postmodernism, as part of the dissolution of philosophy, as Schaeffer views it, struggles to answer that question.

"The Postmodern Turn," as Bartholomew describes it, involves several central ideas: (1) rejection of grandiose narratives, (2) rejection of transcendent truth, and finally (3) emphasis on the subjective authority of the human. This third aspect particularly impacts the hermeneutics of this turn due to the excessive emphasis that postmodern advocates begin to place on the reader's role in determining the meaning of a text. Abner Chou captures the ethos of this turn when he states:

> Those in the deconstructionist, postmodern camp points out the philosophical as well as pragmatic problems of having the reader access the author's intent via a text. In essence, a breakdown of communication occurs between author, text, and reader. The author cannot remain in control of the text once he has written it.[31]

As Chou describes, such a breakdown leaves the postmodern turn in crisis. In a similar way to the incompleteness of the historical-critical and literary models, the postmodern turn lacks a complete hermeneutic.

One example of a postmodern approach in wisdom literature comes from the intriguing work of Johnny Miles, whose monograph entitled *Wise King – Royal Fool* exemplifies a reader-focused hermeneutic. Miles' thesis reveals his aim: "By reveling in the play of language, the postmodernist semiotic approach of this book proposes the poetic function of Proverbs 1-9 as a

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[30] Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture, 50th L'Abri Anniversary Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 145.

[31] Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2018), 27.

satire on Solomon."[32] He adds, "We may liken the poetry of Proverbs 1-9 to a net, a type of labyrinth, in which every point connects with every other point."[33]

The postmodern approach, like the one cited in Miles's work, revels in the complexities and structures of language. However, language for the postmodern scholar becomes a focus to the exclusion of other aspects of the theological and philosophical tasks, often presented as a tool of reader-focused subjectivity. By analogy, postmodernism may focus on language to excess, similar to the literary turn's focus on the text's final form, at the expense of all other considerations (such as the historical).

Although much of the postmodern approach stands in contrast to both modern philosophy and evangelical hermeneutics, it should be noted that one potential area of benefit is that postmodern thinkers give the reader a place of significance in the quest for meaning. Christians, for example, regularly consider how the text of Scripture might be applied to contemporary circumstances or meaning within their lives as readers of the text. The danger for the postmodern turn, however, does not relate to engaging in personal application so much as it is to lose an author and text-centered hermeneutic, which leads into the abyss of subjectivity. Osborne, describing such a reader-focused hermeneutic, cautions, "Finally, the concept of 'free play' in the infinite number of sign potentials or meaning possibilities must come under the same scrutiny."[34]

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[32] Johnny E. Miles. "Wise King-- Royal Fool: Semiotics, Satire and Proverbs 1-9," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 399 (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 2.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 487.

The Theological Turn

According to Bartholomew, the fourth turn, or as he calls it, "the theological," represents a reversal of all three previous turns.[35] The theological turn is generally, although not wholly, synonymous with a biblical or Christian approach to the text.[36] He explains, "The theological turn is a minority school and a broad one at that, so its longer-term effects remain to be seen."[37] The theological turn emphasizes the author's intent, the text (including its historical context and literary structure), and the meaning provided in interpreting a passage. This move is beneficial for studying wisdom literature due to its unified and holistic approach.

Although it is difficult to exemplify this final turn because of the breadth of choices, several notable works demonstrate its core characteristics. Regarding wisdom in particular, the work of Belcher through his study of wisdom literature in *Finding Favour in the Sight of God* is of note. Belcher's work is part of a broader series entitled *New Studies in Biblical Theology, which examines the historical, literary, and theological aspects of many Biblical themes*. A recent collection of essays honoring Waltke also contributes to a Christian-based approach to wisdom. Scholars such as Packer, John Sailhamer, Raymond Van Leeuwen, and others present a broadly evangelical approach to wisdom in this work. Van Leeuwen's essay in the volume is of particular note for wisdom studies due to his examination of the relationship of wisdom and the

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[35] Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, 30.

[36] The theological turn can be summed up nicely through the model of the *hermeneutical triad*, as introduced by Köstenberger and Patterson, "In essence, therefore, the interpretive task consists of considering each of the three major dimensions of the hermeneutical triad—history, literature, and theology—in proper balance, with the first two elements—history and literature—being foundational and with theology at the apex." This approach was heavily emphasized in the doctoral program at Liberty University in Bible Exposition providing a research framework for the present study. See Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 57.

[37] Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, 4–5.

concept of the 'house,' which can broadly speak to various components of creational, social, and political life.

Such an approach also compares favorably to the work of Yoram Hazony, who seeks to bring the Hebrew Scriptures (and the New Testament) into the broader dialogue of philosophy on their own terms. Although writing outside of an evangelical Christian perspective and not strictly contributing to the discipline of theology directly, Hazony seeks to undo the trends in contemporary scholarship that have excluded the Old Testament due to materialistic and anti-supernatural biases. He summarizes his approach: "More specifically, I will argue that the Hebrew Scriptures can be read as works of philosophy to discover what they have to say as part of the broader discourse concerning the nature of the world and the just life for man."[38]

Finally, and more generally, are the works of Abner Chou and David Starling, who have done an admirable job summarizing and advancing the issues of intertextuality and inner-biblical hermeneutics. Although their works cover the entirety of Scripture, many ideas and methods they describe are beneficial for approaching wisdom and Proverbs. In his work *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, Chou asks, "What is truly Christian hermeneutics?"[39] His answer involves examining Scripture for methods and practices of literary interpretation. Chou sees his work in continuity with the larger conversation of the Christian academic conversation as he states, "Those versed in the New Testament's use of the Old Testament will see that my thesis resonates with Beale, Kaiser, Carson, Hamilton, Caneday, and Bock."[40]

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[38] Yoram Hazony, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.

[39] Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles*, 23.

[40] Ibid., 13.

The work and thesis of this dissertation can be firmly placed into this fourth turn of scholarship through an attempt to understand better the role of wisdom in the larger narrative of Scripture, along with its theological and political implications.

Statement of Delimitations

This thesis examines the relationship between wisdom and polity in the Christian canon of Scripture, emphasizing the 66 books of the Reformation canon. It will necessarily exclude apocryphal works. Although Chapter 8 will briefly examine the potential implications of the present research for comparative studies, the material throughout the paper will exclude parallels from ancient Near Eastern texts. Although these categories of works are valuable and provide legitimate academic insight, the scope of this work is intended to examine how wisdom and polity may be defined and related by a particular authoritative canon. This dissertation does not advance an argument for the form of ideal government (such as monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy) but instead will exposit the wisdom ideal of polity or the 'city' as a totalizing archetype defining the organization of a society.

Chapter Summary

This dissertation will prove the thesis through the presentation of seven additional chapters, which build on the material of this introduction. Each chapter focuses on a particular supporting argument. Chapters 2-4 primarily focus on contributions from the book of Proverbs.[41]

In Chapter 2, the reader will be introduced to the first and most foundational argument supporting the thesis, that in the book of Proverbs, the political is made manifest through the literary image of a city presented throughout its pages. This image does not point to a historical

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[41] This dissertation supports the position that Solomon is the primary author of the text, with additional editing at a later date which completed the work.

city but speaks ideally and archetypally through its poetic cast (other parts of Scripture speak to the historical). This image is often missed due to the aforementioned shortcomings of the readings of the skeptic, reductionist, or popularist. The image of the city in Proverbs is not a happenstance nor a trivial component but rather integrates the entirety of Proverbs and likewise provides a foundation to understand wisdom across Scripture.

Chapter 3 goes beyond the static image of the city presented in Chapter 2 by showing the dynamic nature of the book of Proverbs. The central idea presented to the reader is that the heart of the political nature of wisdom is the idea of transformation. This transformation is revealed through the interplay of chapters 1-9 and 10-31. The material presented can be described as showing the internal pedagogy of the text. Proverbs teaches the reader how to read wisdom internally within its pages.

Chapter 4 takes the idea of transformation into a full-blown hermeneutic, serving as a foundation for a better exposition of wisdom across Scripture. In contrast to Chapter 3, an external pedagogy of the text is described. This externalization of focus prepares the reader for the complete exposition of wisdom in chapters 6 and 7. Chou has demonstrated the intertextual and pedagogical function of Scripture through his research, showing how the Bible presents its own way of teaching the reader how to read. His work entitled *Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers* captures this sentiment usefully.[42] Following this methodology, the book of Proverbs will be shown to be a teacher of a politically-centered concept of wisdom and the very philosophy of reading the wisdom genre throughout Scripture. Chapter 4 examines the relationship between wisdom and polity by examining key wisdom words in the text, including חכם in the Old Testament and σοφ- related words from the New Testament. A study of crucial

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[42] Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles*.

city words and antonyms is offered as part of a correlation of concepts for the study, focusing primarily on עִיר (city) and its opposite: מִדְבָּר (wilderness).

Chapter 5, building on previous chapters, advances the thesis of the dissertation by examining political themes of the wisdom genre in canonically adjacent works such as Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations. Each work described provides claims of continuity and discontinuity with wisdom and city themes from Proverbs. Together, this summary advances the notion of a distinct political dimension to the wisdom genre, valuable for the broader expositional act of reading Scripture.

Chapters 6 and 7 involve an expositional application of arguments as presented in previous chapters. Chapter 6 surveys a political reading of wisdom from Genesis to the time of Solomon. Here, the emphasis is on reading the 'mystery' or pre-understanding of wisdom. Chapter 7, however, demonstrates a progression in the appearance of wisdom, wherein explicit political themes manifest. A survey from the time of Solomon to the book of Revelation is offered.

Finally, chapter 8 explores the implications of a political reading of the wisdom genre. This chapter leads the reader through a revitalized approach to the genre in answer to the prevailing consensus (as outlined earlier in Chapter 1). Likewise, the chapter briefly examines the implications and possibilities of a more political reading of the wisdom genre for systematic theology, ancient Near Eastern studies, and various facets of political theology. A general conclusion is provided as a final summary of the complete dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: THE WISDOM CITY

Proverbs, the Wisdom City

The book of Proverbs, as previously argued, stands at the center of wisdom claims and content. It is a junction of wisdom words, threads, and echoes found in the narrative of Scripture. But how does it manifest these patterns? The answer is simple and perhaps surprising: through the appearance of the city. The role of this city in Proverbs will be shown to be a pivotal literary device assisting the reader in understanding the political nature of the wisdom genre while also providing the reader with a theological framework to understand better how the "fear of the Lord" (Prov. 1:7) contributes to a biblical understanding of society. The image of the city must not be considered as a paradigm read into the text; rather, as will be argued in this chapter, it should be understood as an integral literary device present due to the intent of the author(s).

It can be said, therefore, of Proverbs that it is a 'city in a book.' Much like delightful pop-up books displaying splendid three-dimensional structures upon opening, the book of Proverbs presents to the attentive reader an entire outline, image, and structure of a city in its pages.[43] Another contemporary example is the mosaic image, perhaps of a building, which, when zoomed in, reveals thousands or hundreds of thousands of smaller photos that form the composite image. Proverbs functions similarly when zoomed in through the terseness, portability, and shortness of its aphorisms and discourses. When zoomed out thoroughly, the smaller parts give way to a view of the city.

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[43] Longman states, "Poetry is rich in images. The book of Proverbs is certainly no exception. We already noted this when we studied the 'mega-image' of the book, encountering Woman Wisdom on the path of life." Longman rightly emphasizes the poetic use of imagery in the book of Proverbs; however, he focuses on "Woman Wisdom" as the controlling feature. This dissertation will argue for a radically different "mega-image," namely the city. See Longman, *How to Read Proverbs*, 42-43.

The image of the city in Proverbs is often missed because of the tension between reading the book's foreground over and against its background, where the image primarily resides. If the experience of reading the book of Proverbs was a theater play, most of the city ideas would manifest in the backdrop of the stage rather than with the characters or events in the foreground. However, the background in such instances is no less critical. One change and the context of the entire narrative would be altered significantly; so also with Proverbs. The hermeneutical tension between reading the background vs. the foreground manifests mainly in those reading either too little from or too much into the text. The usual groups are involved: the reductionists on the one hand and the historical-critical scholars on the other. In the first case, reading Proverbs as if it is merely a collection of aphorisms deprives the reader of the connective benefits and meaning that the background provides, especially the theological. Likewise, the historical critic, who is so busy importing external ideas into Scripture, misses the literary unity of the image of the city due to the dissection and rearrangement of the text.

With these criticisms in mind, it should be noted that not all scholars, even from various approaches, miss particular city themes and ideas throughout Proverbs. Katherine Dell aptly states, "Clearly, the most fruitful section of Proverbs for any reference to city life is Proverbs 1-9."[44] In addition, she explains, "To enter the book of Proverbs is ostensibly to enter two entirely different worlds—the urban and the rural."[45] Although Dell affirms the presence of the urban concept, she is not persuaded regarding its full interpretive potential. She concludes, "Nor is a city context for the composition of either section implied in the material—there is simply not

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[44] Katherine J. Dell, "Wisdom and Folly in the City: Exploring Urban Contexts in the Book of Proverbs," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 69, Iss. 4 (November 2016): 395.

[45] Ibid., 389.

enough evidence."[46] Nonetheless, Dell comes closest to the city model as presented in this paper, offering a very complementary view of the significance of the city concept. However, her position seems to stop short of a unified literary observation of the city as a controlling book-wide image. Instead, she focuses on the interplay of Woman Wisdom and Woman Folly as the controlling center, which assigns meaning secondarily to the urban concepts across the background of the book.

Likewise, Michael Fox observes regarding Proverbs 1:20 that "Wisdom is not secretive, confining herself to a coterie of initiates. Quite the contrary, she roams about the busiest parts of the city, demanding attention."[47] He adds, "The phrase 'in the city,' which may seem superfluous (and which Toy considers a gloss), actually serves to emphasize the conspicuousness of Wisdom's actions."[48] Although Fox's observation seems to affirm the importance of the city concept in 1:20, elsewhere, he expresses skepticism regarding any unifying theme in Proverbs:

> In the last twenty years there has been a rash of efforts to find designs and patterns in Proverbs, in both its parts and its whole .... Outside of scattered thematic clusters and proverb-strings and an occasional poem, no significant patterns, such as might constrain interpretation, have been widely observed.[49]

Amidst such arguments, positive and negative, the contemporary conversation shows at least that city themes are clearly present and acknowledged as non-controversial amongst scholars. One of the main points of difference between the present work and contemporary

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[46] Dell, "Wisdom and Folly in the City: Exploring Urban Contexts in the Book of Proverbs," 395.

[47] Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, vol. 18A*, *Anchor Bible Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 96.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Michael V. Fox, "Reviews: Like Grapes of Gold Set in Silver: An Interpretation of Proverbial Clusters in Proverbs 10;1-22:16 by Knut Martin Heim," *Hebrew Studies, Vol. 44* (2003), 267. Originally found via Dunham's article. See Kyle C. Dunham, "Structure and Theology in Proverbs: Its Function as an Educational Program for Novice Leaders in Ancient Israel," *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2019), 363.

scholarship is the nature of the focus of the prologue (chs. 1-9). Unlike Longman and Dell, who emphasize the contrasting personifications in the text, it can be argued that the city context coheres whether Lady Wisdom, Solomon, or others are present or not, suggesting the significance and preeminence of the city image that endures throughout.

<div align="center">

The Theological Presentation of the Wisdom City

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Any discussion of the city image in Proverbs must involve an examination of its chief characteristic, namely that it is a theocentric city. The theology of the city can be exposited through several major facets: (1) confession, (2) creation, (3) center, and (4) covenant.

First, there is a type of theological confession, which is stated throughout the book of Proverbs, marking both the text from beginning to end and the image of the city as unmistakably monotheistic and Yahweh-oriented. This can be shown through the appearance and repetition of the phrase "the fear of the Lord." In particular, it is provided as a type of bookends in the prologue in 1:7 and 9:10. However, the phrase is not only present at key pivots in the book but, like the city image itself, is stitched consistently throughout being referenced some 20 times (in various contexts) as found in 1:7, 1:29, 2:5, 3:7, 8;13, 9:10, 10:27, 14:2, 14:26, 14:27, 15:16, 15:33, 16:6, 19;23, 22:4, 23:17, 24:21, 28:14, 29:15 and 31:30. Regarding the significance of the phrase introduced in 1:7, Paul Overland states, "It is noteworthy that reverence for the divine here is directed not towards God generally (ʾĕlōhîm), but towards the LORD, the God of Israel (yhwh)...."[50]

Second, it can be said that the city functions as an echo of creation, connecting it to creation theology. The relationship between wisdom and creation theology is not controversial. Here, it can be said that the city, as a product of man, reflects the functioning-infused image of

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[50] Paul Overland, *Proverbs, Vol. 15, Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (London: Apollos, 2022), 40.

God. That is, God is present as a creator in Scripture (Gen. 1-2), and likewise, man, created in his image, is also a creator, albeit at a level below God's ability. God creates from nothing, whereas man simply re-forms and governs material creation. The city in Proverbs (and in life) becomes an artifact of the divine creative purposes found in and expressed through man. Or, in a slogan, it can be said that God creates the cosmos, man the city.

Third, the idea that God is central to the city, namely that it is a theocentric city, comes into play through the introduction of the appellation "Name of the Lord" attached to the city tower (Prov. 18:10) appearing at the near-center of the book and city image. Thus, the city does not simply contain theological activities, residents who worship God, or theological ideas presented through happenstance. Rather, such notions are centered and ordered in the heart of the city. Tertullian's distinction between the place where God is excluded or present offers insight, "But where God is present, there is the fear of God, there are decent seriousness, vigilant care and anxious solicitude…modest appearance, a united church, and all things Godly."[51]

Finally, the theology of the city can be understood as an exposition and expression of covenantal ideas previously presented in the Old Testament narrative, particularly the Torah. Moses, warning and promising Israel of future blessings and curses, reminded the people: "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field" (Deut. 28:3) and likewise, "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field" (Deut. 28:16). Although much emphasis is placed on the land of Israel as the endpoint of God's promise to Israel, the city (and cities) would necessarily be part of this promise. Such a notion even makes its way into the New Testament text, where Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, describes his disciples as

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[51] J. Robert Wright and Thomas C. Oden, eds., *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 9* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). Tertullian's quote is from *Prescriptions Against Heretics* where he provides commentary on Proverbs 9:10.

follows: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden…. In the 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. 5:14, 16). Thus, the Christian witness to the world, like a city, must show that God is present. This is no less true of the function of the city image in the text of Proverbs.

The Textual Presentation of the Wisdom City

In addition to the introductory and theological observations above, the primary data regarding the presence of the city image in the book of Proverbs can now be considered. Figure 1 shows the distribution of city ideas throughout the book. The chart divides horizontally between Proverbs 1-9 and 10-31. The left-hand column shows verses correlated by rows of chapters across the table. The bottom row shows the frequency of cityscape words per chapter.

Key terms were consistently explored across the text. Most of the significant terms used in the survey include city, gate(s), house(s), way(s), path(s), pit, Sheol, the land, barns, vats, tree of life, natural landscape features (earth, clouds, mist of the sea), snare(s), neighbors, dwelling, springs, direction, streets, door(s), cistern, well, springs, streams, windows, lattice, corner, road(s), market, couch, bed, chambers (of death), the heights, crossroads, portals, fields, foundations, pillars, tower(s), stronghold(s), a ruin, a feast, boundaries, throne, deep waters, brook, wall(s), assembly, pit, landmark, vineyard, court, mountains, valley, and palace. The blue squares in the chart below represent significant gate and tower locations (1:21, 8:3, 18:10, and 31:32). The green and purple squares (from light to dark) represent lesser to greater amounts of references, with 'x's marking the frequency of words within each verse.

	Proverbs 1-9									Proverbs 10-31																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
v. 1								x	xx					x			x				x										
v. 2							xxx	x										x			x							x			
v. 3							xxx	xx				x			x									xx	xx						
v. 4								x							x			xxx						x						xx	xxx
v. 5					xx					x									x		x	x				x					
v. 6			xx		xx		xx	x							x										x						
v. 7		x										x				x		xx			x			x	x						
v. 8		x			xx		xxxx	x												x				x			xx		x		
v. 9		x				x		x		x				x	x					xx											
v. 10		xx		x				x						x		x		xx				xx							xx		
v. 11			xx				x			x	x			xx	xx			x													
v. 12	xx	x					xxx					x		x	xx		x	x			xx										
v. 13	x																x					x	xx								
v. 14				xx	x		xxxxx					xx	xx					x			x		x	x				x			
v. 15	xx	xx		xx	xx			xx	xx		x	xx		x								x	x							x
v. 16					xxxx		x													x									xx
v. 17			xx				x	x		x						xx								x			x		
v. 18		xx	xx	x	x			xxx															x		x	x		
v. 19		x	xx	xx			xx							x	xxx			xx		x					x		
v. 20	xx	x	xxx				x	xx										x	x					xx			
v. 21	xx	xx			xx			x																	x	xx
v. 22		x			xx	x									x			xx	x		x		x				
v. 23		x	x	x			x					x														xx
v. 24		x					xx					xx		x	x				xx	xx			x			
v. 25			xx		xx	xx					xx	xx						x		x	x		xx		x	
v. 26		x	x		x	xxx				x								x		x		x		
v. 27		xx			xxxx	xx			xx	xx							x	xx	xxx	x			x
v. 28	x			x	xx		xx										x			xx	x		x	
v. 29	x			xxx	xx	xx										x			xx		
v. 30				xx	x												xx			xx
v. 31	x		x	x	x				x								xx			x
v. 32				x	x					x			
v. 33	x	xx		x			
v. 34			x			xx										x
v. 35			xx
Total	10	14	21	15	17	5	23	35	29	9	5	7	6	14	18	9	3	12	2	4	12	7	7	15	13	5	9	4	6	9	9

Figure 1: The Distribution of City and City-Related Terms in the Book of Proverbs

Although this list is incomplete, many of the additional terms surveyed were variations of the items mentioned above. The main idea for selecting such terms was not their architectural focus per se but rather the value they contribute to understanding a complete cityscape. That is, not only are the buildings and the city walls included, but all of the contrasting elements of nature and humankind who live in and around the city. One can think of the famous scene in the movie *Man of La Mancha* (1977), where Don Quixote (played by Peter O'Toole) sings of the impossible dream of the knight amidst a rundown Spanish outpost with the bleak, blue, wintery sky behind complete with leafless trees, capturing a sentiment of hope against a background of utter existential bleakness. This expanded understanding of cityscape terms will bear much fruit in literary analysis in the book of Proverbs and later hermeneutical reading strategies for understanding wisdom throughout Scripture.

One thing to notice on the chart above (Figure 1) is that the distribution and use of city terms is significantly greater in the section of Proverbs 1-9. However, such terms remain in regular use throughout 10-31. The importance of this will become evident when the *inner*-textual relationship of the prologue (chs. 1-9) and the wisdom collection (chs. 10-31) is considered. The primary data just cited forms the image of the city for the reader, but also can be illustrated in such a way to show the coherence and manifestation of this literary device through the following representation (see Figure 2):
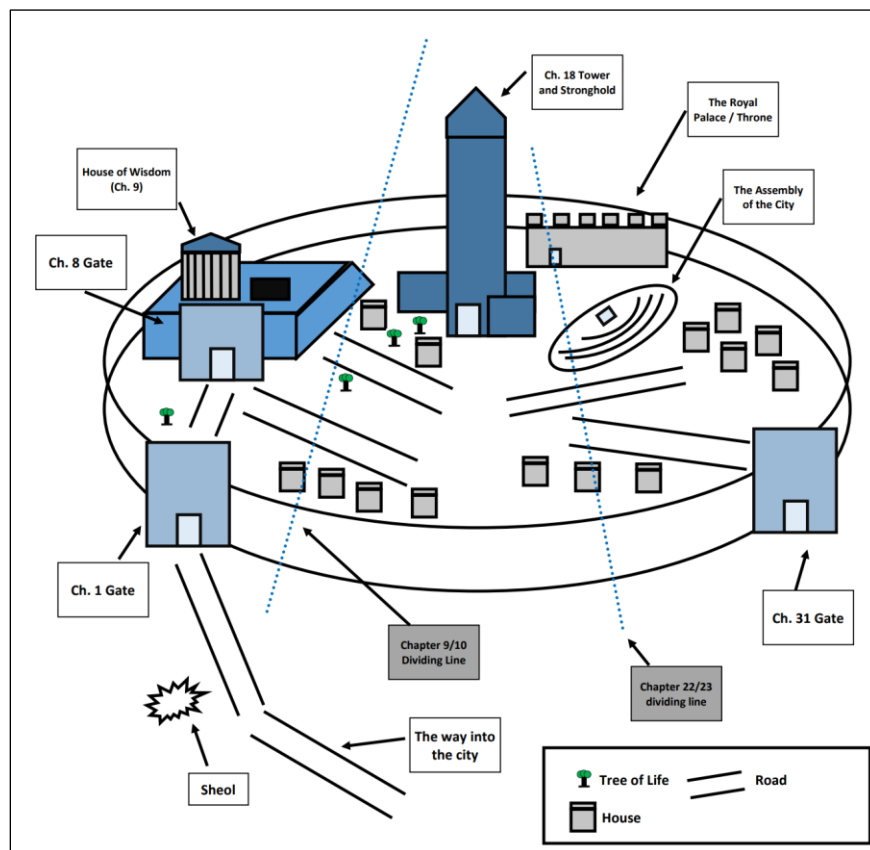

Figure 2 - The Wisdom City of Proverbs, Illustrated by James E. Golec, Jr.

With this data and image in mind, the outline of the Wisdom City can now be exposited. In order to do this, two approaches will be presented: (1) the city in Proverbs 1-9 and (2) the extended city in Proverbs 1-31, covering the entire book.

The Image of the City in Proverbs 1-9

The book of Proverbs begins with a prologue (1:1-7) but then proceeds to deliver

Solomon's instructions to his son. Soon after, an interesting interposition occurs: personified

wisdom enters the narrative. However, she is not an elusive entity or a detached idea but

manifests within a city (or *the* city). Thus, within 21 verses of the beginning of the book, the city

image is introduced, creating context and background (Proverbs 1:20-21):

> Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
> > in the markets, she raises her voice;
> > at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
> > at the entrance of the city gates (שְׁעָרִים בָּעִיר) she speaks…

The word in Hebrew, חָכְמוֹת, is the plural noun form of wisdom. The plural here is

suggested to be the 'plural of majesty' or emphasis—the implication of this grammatical use is to

emphasize the unique nature of wisdom in the context. Waltke and O'Connor describe this

particular function, "Related to the plurals of extension and of abstract reference is a group of

intensive plurals. In this usage (sometimes called the *pluralis majestatis*), the referent is a

singular individual, which is, however, so thoroughly characterized by the qualities of the noun

that a plural is used."[52]

The two verses highlighted above, i.e., *the invitation of wisdom*, as it will be called in this

dissertation, provide a hermeneutical key to the city outline. Not only do these verses connect the

ideas of wisdom and city together, but they also form the architectural beginning of the image of

the city in Proverbs. Before proceeding, it is helpful to compare the previous material in the

book. Including the wisdom invitation, up to this point, three major sub-sections can be

delineated: (1) the introduction (1:1-7), (2) Solomon's opening discourse spoken to his son, and

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[52] Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 122.

(3) the call of wisdom which begins in verse 20 (until v. 33). Leaving the common introduction aside for the moment, it should be noted that although 1:20-21 contain the architectural and city beginnings, it is not the first image on the backdrop of the stage. Instead, that distinction goes to Sheol. In Solomon's discourse before arriving at the city, he warns his son to avoid sinners and thieves (1:11-13):

> If they say, "Come with us,
>   let us lie in wait for blood;
>   let us ambush the innocent without reason;
> like Sheol let us swallow them alive and whole,
> like those who go down to the pit;
> we shall find all precious goods,
> we shall fill our houses with plunder…[53]

Thus, immediately preceding the entrance of the city is the dangerous ex-urban area where thieves and brigands lie in wait for the unsuspecting traveler, looking for easy (and foolish) gain. Solomon demonstrates the use of hyperbole to describe such actions as a type of Sheol standing right before the city gates. In verse 15, the imagery of the background is further enhanced with an explicit reference to the "way" (דֶּרֶךְ) and "paths" (מִנְּתִיבָתֶם) of such men. Although words describing a 'way' or 'ways' are often reduced by the modern reader to the extension of a personal choice or existential context (they have these connotations as well), it must be stated that their initial meaning is defined by a literal way to, in, or through a city.

In contrast, personified wisdom (חָכְמוֹת) is standing at the entrance of the city, calling the simple (פֶּתִי) to sophistication.[54] Such a call echoes themes of creation and re-creation from Genesis, where God spoke everything into existence: "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and

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[53] Note the contrast of the houses of the thieves with the houses of the women in ch. 9.

[54] Waltke helpfully provides the detail of some of the city context when he states, "In the public squares (bāreḥōbôt) denotes the broad area that offered room for commercial trade and public meetings in contrast to the ancient city's narrow streets. A plaza could be located just inside the gate, or even between the outer and inner gates as at Tel Dan, or at the head of several streets." See Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, 202.

there was light" (Gen. 1:3). Likewise, the personification of wisdom speaks into the dire

circumstances of the people who at best are 'simple' but who also might fall into much worse

outside the city, the way of Sheol. In contrast, her words are an offering of re-creation and

transformation. They also are spoken at the beginning of the work of creation, the city itself,

manifesting a line between the chaos of Sheol and Yahweh's order within the walls.

A further contrast between the exterior brigands and the city can be seen in the purpose of

their methods. The thieves are users, not producers. They collect but do not build. The city itself

stands in contrast to such a perspective, with its complex craftsmanship, construction, and multi-

generational conservation, all won through the fruits of wisdom. Listening to wisdom comes

with a promise, "…but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread

of disaster" (Prov. 1:33).

Lady Wisdom's appearance at the city's entrance should be no surprise, for gates were

incredibly important in the ancient world. Although they functioned as fortified entrances, they

also became important gathering places and non-geographic centers with their associated

governmental functions. M. Phua helpfully describes the importance of the gate, especially in

Israel, via three major ideas: first, the obvious entrance to the city, second as a place of "public

concourse," and finally, third, "…as a metaphor, it represents the entire city."[55]

 Gate, translated from שַׁעַר (šaʿar), is a significant architectural word combining urban

structure with governmental function.[56] It occurs approximately 304 times in the Old

Testament.[57] The gate was significant in several respects. First, as a general administrative

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[55] M. Phua, "Architectural Imagery," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, eds. Tremper Longman III & Petter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 23.

[56] שַׁעַר (šaʿar) occurs in the book of Proverbs in 1:21, 8:3, 8:34, 14:19, 22:22, 24:7, 31:23, and 31:31.

[57] Word count based on BibleWorks' statistics.

center, it demonstrates the importance and functionality of a city. Otto describes this sense of prominence, "Like the palace gate, the city gate can take on metaphorical connotations of strength and power when a land is represented by its urban centers."[58] He cites examples from Genesis 22:17 and 24:60 regarding the taunt of enemies destroying or taking over the gates of their enemies. Second, שַׁעַר (šaʿar), standing in for ʿîr, has a distinguishing function as Otto states, "The gate was a prominent architectural feature of the fortifications that made a settlement an ʿîr rather than a village. By synecdoche, therefore, it can represent the city as a whole with its inhabitants."[59] Finally, the gate can be related to divine places, such as Jacob's description of the house of God and the "gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:17b), or to various architectural features and entrances of Ezekiel's visions of the temple (Ezek. 8:14, 9:2, 10:19, 11:1, 44:2, 44:4, 46:1).

At this point, it is helpful to introduce the overall scheme of the image of the city in chapters 1-9. The beginning of the image has already been introduced (1:20-21), which forms the beginning of the inclusio. The second side is found in Proverbs 8. There are actually two references to gates that are significant (8:3 and 8:34). These two verses also create a chapter-level inclusio around the inner content of chapter 8 (which includes the critical discourse regarding wisdom and creation). This paper contends that the gates mentioned in vs. 3 and 34 refer to the same gate.

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[58] Eissfeldt Otto, "שַׁעַר," ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 374.

[59] Ibid., 373.

One other interpretive problem exists with the gate(s) referenced in chapters 1 and 8. It is not entirely clear if the referenced gate is meant to be a separate gate, or the same one found in chapter 1. The significance of these choices does not change the presence of a city image in the text. Still, it presents three interpretive possibilities: (1) a city with a gate on each side (reflecting different gates between chs.1 and 8) and a city center in the middle or (2) a single gate with a circuitous path

Figure 3 Possible City Schemes from Proverbs 1-9

through the city leading back to the original gate (ch. 1's gate = ch. 8's gate) or (3) an opening gate with a second gate "on the heights" (8:2) leading to the house wisdom builds in chapter 9 (this third option is shown in Figure 2, the Illustrated Wisdom City).

One of the reasons for the tension in these interpretations is because of the textual 'front' and the explicit reference to the פִּי־קָרֶת, literarily 'the mouth of the town.' What does mouth here mean, and what does town mean? The city word here is not עִיר, as in 1:20-21. Should a town be considered a town or village within the city limits with its own second gate? Or, likewise, is the second gate an access point at a height leading simultaneously higher or deeper into the city (perhaps accessing the temple)? Or does it simply reference the mouth/gate of the second gate, which is considered geographically significant? What is clear is that chapter 8 escalates the reader's understanding of who Lady Wisdom is, as Koptak describes, "Again, we find Wisdom calling out in the public square. Four different descriptions—the heights, the meeting of the

paths, the gates, and the entrances—show that she has chosen to stand where she can be heard by the greatest number (as in 1:20–21)."[60]

Although this dissertation takes a literary approach to the city image and outline in Proverbs as a starting point, it is helpful to briefly consider how the archaeology of Israelite cities may provide an important source of contextual information.[61] Zeev Herzog in the monumental work: *The Architecture of Ancient Israel: From the Prehistorical to the Persian Periods*, describes different types of cities such as capital, major administrative, fortified towns and provincial towns.[62] His analysis, especially of capital cities, is of interest to the question at hand. Although Proverbs is archetypal (or anonymous in terms of its city identification), one may presume that a general background of Jerusalem is at play due to the book's connection with Solomon. If this is the case, then Herzog's summary of the characteristics of Samaria and Jerusalem may provide some clarification on the layout of the city and its gate(s). Herzog notes that cities in the ancient world tended to be one of three plans (or a combination thereof): orthogonal, peripheral, or radial.[63] He suggests capital cities tended towards an orthogonal plan, at least in the interior of the city (here understood as the orthogonal within the peripheral). Somewhere within this layout was the acropolis of the city.[64] The acropolis of Samaria has

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[60] Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs, The NIV Application Commentary*, 225.

[61] I am especially grateful to my second reader Dr. Joseph Cathey who pointed out the regular pattern of single-gated cities in ancient Israel. This building technique reinforced the defense of the city in a single point of entry. His recommendation of Kempinki and Reich's work *The Architecture of Ancient Israel: From the Prehistorical to the Persian Periods* as a definitive source in these matters is especially appreciated (see the following footnote reference).

[62] Zeev Herzog, "Settlement and Fortification Planning in the Iron Age," in *The Architecture of Ancient Israel: From the Prehistoric to the Persian Periods*, eds. Aharon Kempinski & Ronny Reich (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1992), 231-274.

[63] Ibid., 247-248.

[64] An "Acropolis" here is defined as the high place of a city.

survived, unlike that of Jerusalem, making a definitive analysis connecting archaeological remains to the implied city of Proverbs difficult. Herzog states:

> The structure of the acropolis [of Samaria], at any rate, clearly indicates that the planners made certain to separate completely the royal enclosure and the civilian residential quarters. It may be supposed that this model also applied to the acropolis of Jerusalem, capital of the United Monarchy and the Kingdom of Judah.[65]

The separateness of the enclosure that is suggested here by Herzog may explain the gate(s) in Proverbs chapter 8 and how they differ from the gate in chapter 1. This second gate may simply be an inner gate (non-administrative) leading into the acropolis of Solomon's Jerusalem.

It may be difficult to choose amongst the three interpretive options mentioned above definitively. Choice one seems the most fitting because some ancient cities had multiple gates (cf. Jerusalem). Likewise, although the second gate is described as being in front of the town, that word is distinct from the more general city word used in the first part of the inclusio, suggesting the gates are distinguished from each other in some noteworthy manner. Assigning the gates a *textual* precedence is an important factor here as well. Whatever some of these specific words meant originally, they were placed in a final literary form for a reason. Either way, the presence of a gate or gates providing access to a *middle* city is presented by these first nine chapters in Proverbs. The final details may never be known, so exegetical humility is recommended.

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[65] Zeev Herzog, "Settlement and Fortification Planning in the Iron Age," 250.

	Proverbs 1-9									Proverbs 10-31																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Total	10	14	21	15	17	5	23	35	29	9	5	7	6	14	18	9	3	12	2	4	12	7	7	15	13	5	9	4	6	9	9

Figure 4 The City Inclusio in Proverbs 1-9

As Figure 4 illustrates, the textual location of the gates (represented by the two royal blue squares in 1:21 and 8:3) encompasses the material in chapters 2 through 7 (represented by the green line). This can also be understood through a simple outline of the inclusio (1:20 / 8:3,34) as follows:

A Wisdom at the City Gate (1:20)
A' Wisdom at the City Gate (8:3,34)

Because the gate in 1:20 is pivotal, it can be said that the reader has now transited into the middle-content of the city after reading Proverbs 1:20-33. The middle city description indicates the cityscape particulars and the textual material of Proverbs between points A and A' in the inclusio. The material found within this section is composed of the remaining Solomonic discourses generally using the invitation, "My son…" or "Hear, O sons, a father's instruction."[66]

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[66] 1:8,1:10, 2:1, 3:1, 3:11, 3:21, 4:1, 4:10, 4:20, 5:1, 5:7, 6:1, 6:20, 7:1, 7:24, 8:32.

What is interesting about these discourses is that they maintain city-related terms throughout in a consistent manner. Significant is the use of words (or concepts) such as way, path, road, crossroads, and various words of directionality, all of which conjure up the appearance of the stone streets intersecting and leading towards, within, and throughout the city (1:31, 2:8, 2:12, 2:13, 2:15, 2:20, 3:6, 3:17, 3;23, 3:31, 4:11, 4:14, 4:19, 4:26, 5:6, 5:8, 5:16, 5:21, 6:6, 6:23, 7:8, 7:12, 7;25, 7:27, 8:2, 8:13, 8:20, 8:32, 9:6, 9:15). In Proverbs 1-9, the roads happen to lead to places in the city for either good or bad ends. In writing this, such a proposal is not so radical. The reductionist approach to Proverbs (and wisdom) generally would read such statements out of context and see such ways or paths as merely existential, philosophical, or theological terms. Here, the reader is taught by the city image that the reality of the city comes first, then matters of application. Take the example of Proverbs 4:19:

> The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
> they do not know over what they stumble.

The reductionistic approach will read this in isolation from context, understanding 'way' to mean *only* a moral choice or the sum of one's moral choice or direction. A contextual reading based on the image of the city starts with *city* terms and then, and only then, applies such ideas beyond the primary intent of the text. The idea that good and bad choices are made by the path one chooses in the city should not be underestimated. In the modern world, a poor choice can be made by a credit card transaction, an argument in private, or a press of a button. In the ancient world, in most cases, one had to leave a residence and travel along a 'way' or a 'path' to choose. What path would it be? The path to the sanctuary? The path of a prostitute? The path of the spring to get water? The path to the stronghold? This can be represented in a formulaic manner:

> Moral Way = Application of the (physical way in the city)

The example here is based on an approach in computer programming where a variable is cast into another form. For example, there is a difference between a string and a number in computing. A function can be run that casts a string ("1234" which could be a house address) into a number ("1234" = one thousand two hundred and thirty-four) which can be used in a calculation. Without this cast process, the program errs because it cannot compute a string of "1234." The main point of this example is that behind every figurative use stands a default reference to a real part of a city. This is not a pedantic point; it makes the text come alive when readers distinguish these ideas. The other side of this argument is that more figurative uses of such city words also benefit the use and meaning of city language, opening up Proverbs and Scripture to significant intertextual possibilities. In summary, it can be said that *existential language is analogical to city language*, but city language cannot be excluded or forgotten from the hermeneutical task.

With these hermeneutical considerations in mind, some middle-city references can now be considered in summary form. *Middle-city* refers to the textual content between the gates of chapters 1-8. Like the composite photo analogy mentioned above, the middle-city terms do not necessarily provide an explicit narrative (They do provide an implicit narrative which will be explored later in the chapter.) but are present in the background, moving things along and providing a connective context for the reader.

Starting post-gate (1:20-21), one is immediately struck by the number of ways, paths, and streets that appear. Solomon skillfully adds these details, intersecting the literalness of the city, which his audience would have understood, with the complexities of wisdom choices. What is interesting about such infrastructure language is that it never abates throughout the book of

Proverbs, although it seems to slow after chapter 22. After chapter 22, many city words remain, but they tend to be built objects or other facets of the city.

Beyond the roads and the ways of the middle city, various landmarks of interest appear. Houses are mentioned (especially of the forbidden woman), and the land[67] itself (2:21-22) is noted. Land has always been an essential concept in biblical history and theology. As Elmer Martens explains, "God's design, as stated in Exod 5:22 – 6:8 and repeated in Hosea 2:14-23 included bringing Israel to the land. The books of Joshua and Judges describe how this intention came to fulfillment."[68] Martens continues by connecting wisdom literature and the land:

> About the message of this literature one scholar says, "The kerygma of wisdom can be summed up in one word: 'life.'" Support for the position is at hand: "Whoever finds me (wisdom) finds life" (Prov 8:35). The object of God's salvific activity by bringing the people into the land, it will be remembered, was to make possible a new quality of life.[69]

Chapter 3 is of particular interest because of its creational and re-creational vocabulary, including a reference to the "tree of life" (עֵץ־חַיִּים) (3:18).[70] The Tree of Life is a technical concept connecting the text back to Genesis. However, it adds nicely to the city image, introducing the possibility of a garden-like enclave in the middle city area. That is, soon after entry into the city, one encounters the ways of the city in their complexity and comes upon a large, magnificent tree that is so noticeable that it is a landmark unto itself, requiring explanation.

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[67] In his Old Testament theology entitled *God's Design*, Martens specifies four major topics covering the OT: (1) salvation, (2) the covenant community, (3) knowledge of God, and (4) the land. See Elmer A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

[68] Ibid., 187.

[69] Ibid, 188-189.

[70] The tree of life is referenced throughout Scripture but finds a special emphasis in the book of Proverbs: Gen. 2:8-9, 3:1, 3:24, 3:22-24, Prov. 3:13-18, 11:30, 13:12, 15:4, Rev. 2:7, 22:1-2, 22:14-15.

Although this section is a Solomonic discourse, the themes of wisdom and creation are already being introduced and fused, foreshadowing later developments such as the content of chapter 8. The Tree of Life is found elsewhere in the book of Proverbs, particularly in 11:30, 13:12, and 15:4. What is interesting from the Wisdom City outline perspective is that these examples are sprinkled throughout the first half of the book leading up to the appearance of the tower (18:10) where the "name of the Lord" is referenced. After this, the tree of life is no longer mentioned (see Figure 2).[71]

Chapter 4 continues introducing various ways, mainly focusing on the "path of the righteous" (4:18) leading to "springs of life" (4:23). The ways of the righteous and the wicked are especially contrasted as being in the "light" (4:18) versus "deep darkness" (4:19). Again, one can imagine the wicked out at a time they should not be in an unlit portion of the city and as a result falling into trouble.

In chapter 5, Sheol makes another appearance.[72] Whereas in chapter 1, Sheol is associated with the evil of the thieves outside of the city, here Sheol appears as a danger within, suggesting some deep and hidden recess into the underworld—particularly associated with the adulteress woman. 5:5 reads, "Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol…." Notably, the assembly of the city is mentioned along with a return of refreshing water motifs such as "water," "flowing water," "springs," and "streams of water." It should be obvious that although these are moral analogies, they all fit appropriately into the image of a desirable city

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[71] An interesting observation which complements the placement of the "tree(s)" of life in Proverbs, is the appearance of milk (Prov. 27:27) and honey (Prov. 5:3, 24:13, 24:14, 25:16, 25:27, 27:7) references which are mostly clustered towards the end of the book, in the later part of the city image. A possible intertextual echo is present: Proverbs begins with a nod to Genesis but towards the end shows the realization of conquest era blessings through dwelling in the land of "milk and honey."

[72] In Proverbs, Sheol is mentioned 9 times: 1:12, 5:5, 7:27, 9:18, 15:11, 15:24, 23:14, 27:20, and 30:16.

with one of the most important resources necessary for life: water. They may also echo the idea of the rivers of Eden, watering the garden in Genesis (cf. Gen. 2:10).

Chapter 6 is an oddity among the other chapters of the prologue in that it does not contain many city-word references. The ones that do occur seem to be indirect locations, such as the places of respite one may have if the 'father's commandment' and 'mother's teaching' are honored. The reader here can imagine the inhabitant of a city sleeping and dwelling comfortably in such wisdom (cf. the 'sleep' focused Psalms 3-6).

In contrast to chapter 6, chapter 7 explodes again with city words and scenes. More evocative city words such as corner, house, street, and market appear. Estes notes a particular "vivid realism" present, which shows throughout this chapter via the first-person description of the narrator's view within the city (where he spies out the "simple youth" being seduced by the adulterous woman (Prov. 7:6-23).[73]

Chapter 8 continues the description of the middle city while introducing the confluence of architecture and wisdom teaching with the appearance of a second gate and a second invitation from Lady Wisdom. The city descriptions include crossroads, gates, the "front of the town," doors, and a description of the natural world (a background of backgrounds to the city).[74]

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[73] Estes notes, "The wisdom stories cited by von Rad, as well as the stories in Ecc 4:13–16 and 9:13–18, and the story in Prov 7:6–23, which will be examined in this study, are marked by the author's first-person account. By this means, the author lends an air of vivid realism to his narrative as though it were a scene that he has personally witnessed. Significant details in the texts, however, including direct quotations and rhythmic language, strongly suggest that the stories in fact emerge from the author's imagination rather than from his empirical observation. As such, they are fictions composed in order to teach principles of wisdom." See Daniel J. Estes, "Fiction and Truth in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature," *Themelios*, Vol. 35, no. 3 (November 2010): 391. This may partially be the case, but such ideas may represent fragments of actual memories of the city dwelling author.

[74] Chapter 8 has been the focus of speculation regarding the origin and true nature of Lady Wisdom in the prologue of Proverbs. Although the topic is important, it is treated in many other works in detail. For the purposes of this paper, wisdom in chapter 8 can be understood as a characteristic of God in his role as creator. For rhetorical purposes, wisdom is made feminine, not as an expression of Feminism or an echo of some previous goddess theology, but because of the connection of woman and marriage, a metaphor which ties together Solomon's advice to his son and the great value of wisdom. The apostle Paul makes a similar move comparing the church to the bride of Christ.

Towards the end of Proverbs 1-9, another important observation can be made regarding the city structure. As has already been alluded, the house that wisdom builds in chapter 9 is a significant structure in the image of the city. This can be shown via the illustration in Figure 5, which shows the seven pillared house of wisdom built on the city's heights. Although Wisdom's house is outside of the inclusio in terms of its textual positioning, it nonetheless is rightfully included as a telos of the description of the city through its explicit description as being in "the highest places in the town" (Prov. 9:3, cf. 8:2). This theology of elevation and the promotion of lady wisdom in chapter 9 leads the reader towards the finale of the prologue. This is an ending that not only describes the high point or progression of the prologue (chs. 1-9) but also serves as a transition and preparation for the wisdom material to come (in chs. 10-31).[75]
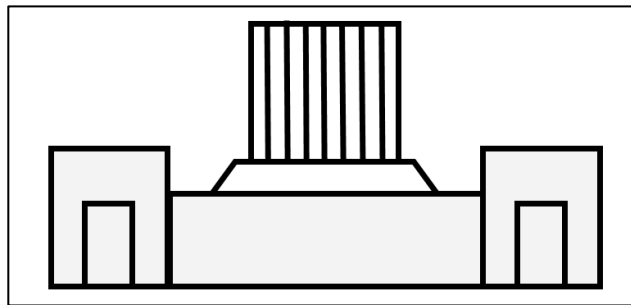
Figure 5: Wisdom's House Built atop the City's Acropolis

Thus, the role of wisdom in chapters 1-9 is closely connected with the progression of the architecture, as the exposition of the complete city inclusio of chapters 1-9 has shown. Chapter 9 functions in a similar manner to that of Psalm 1, which provides two ways (the way of the righteous and the way of the sinner). Lady Wisdom builds her house, but Lady Foolishness borrows hers. Lady Wisdom is given textual privilege through the prominence of order and word

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[75] Although not a quote, the significance of Proverbs chapter 9 was examined in a research paper for OBST 860 at Liberty University by the author of this dissertation.

frequency, yet both women remain challenging to the reader: Whose house will you choose or what type of city will this be? Wise or foolish?

The Image of the City in Proverbs 1-31

With the summary exposition of the house of wisdom's place in chapters 1-9, the exposition (or tour) of the city image of the prologue can be considered complete. However, there is another city layer that is equally important to that of the prologue: the extended city. This enlarged notion overlaps with the city in chapters 1-9, encompassing the book's entirety. Again, this was determined by the inclusio of various gates. The word 'gate' appears several more times throughout the book in proverbial contexts not related to the structure of the city: 14:19, 22:22, 23:7, and 24:7. Each of these instances can be classified as gate proverbs versus uses of gate that signify essential turns in the structure of the book. Their appearance contributes to the literary cityscape by adding more architectural details to middle-city descriptions. In this case, the gates of 1:20-21 and 31:23,31 complete the beginning and end of the city inclusio. This can be seen clearly in Figure 6, where the final blue square in chapter 31 is connected to the starting gate location. Together, these form the largest city outline and demonstrate the best perspective on the claim that the book of Proverbs is a 'city in a book.'
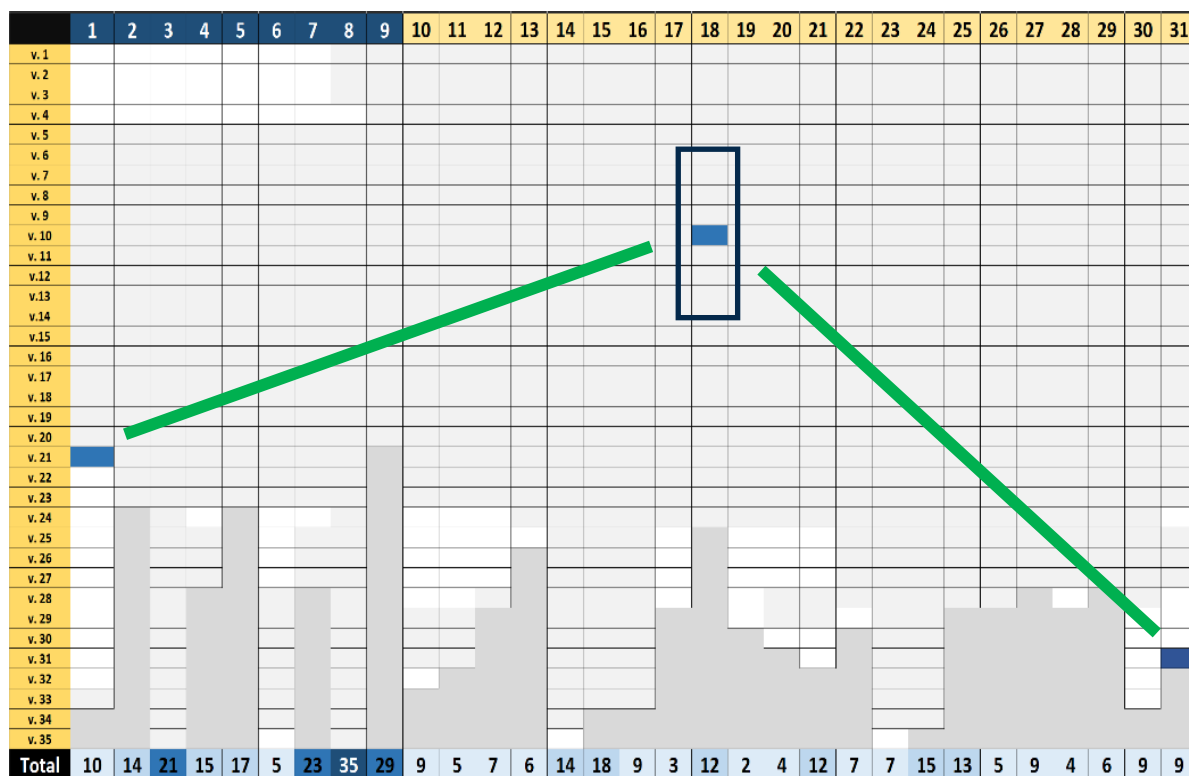
Figure 6: The Extended City Image of Proverbs 1-31

Similar to the city inclusio in chapters 1-9, this extended city outline also places a green line to show the textual space of the middle city. What is interesting and somewhat analogous to the monumental presence of the house of wisdom (9:1) at the zenith of the city in chapters 1-9 is the presence of a tower (מִגְדָּל), which is roughly in the center of the book of Proverbs (identified in Figure 6 within the blue rectangle at the center of the chart). As Proverbs 18:10 describes:

> The name of the LORD is a strong tower (מִגְדָּל);
> the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

This inclusio can also be expressed as a simple chiasm:

> A - City Gate (1:20-21)
>   B - The Tower ("The name of the Lord") (18:10)
> A' - City Gate (31:23,31)

This tower is not only textually significant for its location but also theologically as well. The tower associates the name of the Lord with the very center of the image of the city standing

at the center of the text. The prophet Ezekiel presents a similar scenario at the end of his work, stating, "And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There" (Ezek. 48:35).[76] Psalm 61:1-3 also echoes 'tower theology':

> Hear my cry, O God,
> listen to my prayer;
> from the end of the earth, I call to you
> when my heart is faint.
> Lead me to the rock
> that is higher than I,
>   for you have been my refuge,
>   a strong tower against the enemy.

Along with the tower, other 'middle' content can be recognized. The extended city contains a continuation of many of the city features found in chapters 1-9 but also mentions the 'strong city,' ruins (10:15), additional mentions of the tree of life, the land, fountains, snares, nationality, Abaddon, windows, brooks, walls, castles, pits, fig trees, vineyards, the king's palace, and the assembly. Many of these notions will be examined further in later chapters, so they only require a brief mention here.

The Nature of the Prologue (Proverbs 1-9)

With the image of the city introduced, it is now time to turn to a consideration of the first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs, which, as a literary and theological masterpiece, is foundational not only for the book of Proverbs but also for its contribution to understanding wisdom politically throughout Scripture. In these dense chapters, royal instruction, theology, philosophy, and poetry are tied together in the midst of the image of the city. It is in the

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[76] Ganzel states, "…while the future temple vision repeatedly describes the return of God's glory to the temple area, this verse would seem to indicate a broader scope--the return of God's presence to the entire city." Ganzel believes the phrase to be a replacement name for "Jerusalem" as evidence of the significant change of ages (from destroyed Jerusalem to the redeemed city of the future). See Tova Ganzel, "'And the Name of the City from That Day on: "YHWH" is There' (Ezek. 48:35): A New Interpretation." *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 70 (2023): 238-239.

interposition of this background image and foreground claims that a biblical political discourse is forged. Beyond this specific purpose, it can be said that the prologue properly sets up the reader's approach to chapters 10-31. As will be argued in this section, the prologue not only introduces essential material but also sets the agenda for the remainder of the book. Thus, chapters 10-31 echo and extend material from chapters 1-9.

Solomon has generally been held as the author of the prologue within conservative scholarship. Outside of this perspective, authorship has been attributed to other much later authors(s). Solomonic authorship will be assumed for this paper. It should be recognized in the book that Solomon is not the only author of Proverbs, as Andrew Steinmann observes, "The book of Proverbs is one of the only two Old Testament books that are self-admittedly of composite authorship (the other is Psalms)."[77] One significant implication of this fact is that whoever the final editor was, he recognized and extended the city outline which was already present in Proverbs 1-9 into chapter 31.

Although the broad city outline of Proverbs has been introduced previously in this paper, it is helpful to look more deeply into the structure of Proverbs 1-9. Although there seems to be a consensus on the Solomonic discourses, there appears to be a variety of differences in the outlines of various scholars, which are worth examining better to understand the content of chapters 1-9. In order to do this, three outlines will be presented from various scholars (Fox, Whybray, and Waltke), with a fourth outline proposed, original to this dissertation, which specifically considers the image of the city.

First to be considered is the outline provided by Michael V. Fox, which is divided between lectures (I-X) and interludes (A-E):

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[77] Andrew E. Steinmann, "Proverbs 1-9 as a Solomonic Composition." *Journal of the Evangelical Society* (Dec 2000), 659.

Prologue: 1:1–7
I. 1:8–19 Avoid Gangs
       A. 1:20–33 Wisdom's Warning
II. 2:1–22 The Path to Wisdom
III. 3:1–12 The Wisdom of Piety
       B. 3:13–20 In Praise of Wisdom
IV. 3:21–35 The Wisdom of Honesty
V. 4:1–9 Loving Wisdom, Hating Evil
VI. 4:10–19 The Right Path
VII. 4:20–27 The Straight Path
VIII. 5:1–23 Another Man's Wife and One's Own
       C. 6:1–19 Four Epigrams on Folly and Evil
IX. 6:20–35 Adultery Kills
X. 7:1–27 Beware the Seductress
       D. 8:1–36 Wisdom's Self-Praise
       E. 9:1–18 Two Banquets[78]

The first observation about Fox's outline is that it is a work of sophistication attempting to do justice to Solomon's discourse material and the various breakout texts of wisdom. However, without a city context, Fox's outline runs into issues. The wisdom sections are demoted to being seen as mere 'interludes' instead of critical pivots and progressions within the prologue. Therefore, the importance of wisdom in relation to the city as a denouement is missed completely. Notably, the absence of city ideas in Fox's outline descriptions is interesting. For example, Solomon's first discourse is reduced simply to the sage advice to avoid gangs versus understanding it as a drama showing the dangers of Sheol, which await travelers outside the divine archetypal city.

The second outline of Proverbs 1-9 comes from R.N. Whybray, who saw the content divided into ten sections entitled "The Book of the Ten Discourses."[79] Whybray seems to operate

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[78] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, vol. 18A* (New Haven; London: Yale University Pres, 2008), 96.

[79] Roger N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 33.

within the historical-critical model and is intensely concerned with Egyptian influence, as he

explained, "These introductions, similar in form and content and of roughly equal length, so

strongly resemble the introductions to the pedagogical instructions in Egyptian (and to some

extent Babylonian) wisdom literature that the resemblance can hardly be accidental."[80] His

outline reads as follows:

> Preface 1:1-5
> Discourse #1 1:8-19 – The Avoidance of Evil Company
> Discourse #2 2:1-19 - Avoidance of the 'Strange Woman'
> Discourse #3 3:1-10 - Duties towards God
> Discourse #4 3:21-31 - Duties towards One's Neighbor
> Discourse #5 4:1-5 - The Traditional Character of Wisdom
> Discourse #6 4:10-18 - Avoidance of Evil Company
> Discourse #7 4:20-26 -The Importance of Vigilance
> Discourse #8 5:1-21- Avoidance of the 'Strange Woman'
> Discourse #9 6:20-32 - Avoidance of the 'Strange Woman'
> Discourse #10 7:1-21 - Avoidance of the 'Strange Woman'

The discourse-focused outline provided above does not cover every verse or section in

the prologue. Since Whybray saw the speeches above as sources within the text to be discovered

and isolated, he did not seem as concerned with the final literary form (at least in this outline and

discussion). He classifies some of the extra material as isolated wisdom poems or interludes.

Whybray's overview demonstrates his reluctance to attribute unity to the prologue due to its

pedagogical telos:

> Unlike the sermons of Deuteronomy and the teaching of the prophets, this "Book of the
> Ten Discourses" is a handbook of instruction designed for use in school and is addressed
> not to a whole community on the basis of a religious tradition but to individual pupils
> who are being prepared for adult life.[81]

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[80] Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9*, 35.

[81] Ibid., 51.

Whybray's analysis is sophisticated; however, his attempt to observe strong Egyptian influence upon the text, both in terms of content and form, does not keep with the unity of the final canonical text in Proverbs. In addition, his interpretation of the prologue as a private collection stands in tension with the general tendency of public reception of Scripture and canonical availability. Whybray's analysis seems speculative since the implied reader of the text could just as likely be the 'son' or 'sons' of Israel, whether near (in Solomon's time) or far (Israel after Solomon's time, the New Testament era, or contemporary readers) (cf. Hos. 11:1, Matt. 2:15).

The third outline comes from Bruce Waltke, who has significantly contributed to the questions of wisdom and Proverbs and is well-known in the field. His magisterial commentary helpfully guides readers towards a better understanding of the text. His approach to Proverbs is clearly defined as literary, by which he focuses on the unity of the text. This can be explicitly seen in his outline of Proverbs 1-9:

> A   Rival invitations of the father and the gang to the son (1:8–19)
> B   Wisdom's rebuke of the gullible (1:20–33)
>   C   Janus: The father's command to heed teaching as a safeguard… (2:1–22)
>   D   The father's commands to heed teaching (3:1–4:27)
>   D′   The father's warnings against the unchaste wife (5:1–6:35)
>   C′   Janus: The father's warnings against Wisdom's rival (7:1–27)
> B′   Wisdom's invitation to the gullible (8:1–36)
> A′   Rival invitations of Wisdom and the foolish woman to the gullible (9:1–18)[82]

Waltke describes this outline as a concentric pattern, which uses two invitations to frame the material in between, namely the invitation of the parents in 1:8-9 and that of wisdom in Ch. 9.[83]

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[82] Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 12. The outline was edited slightly for formatting purposes.

[83] Ibid.

Interestingly, Waltke points out that "the words of wicked men (1:11–14) and the wicked woman (7:14–20) are quoted and so form an inclusio around the father's lectures."[84] This insight provides a helpful addition to the city outline: namely that wickedness exists on the outskirts, the outside, or extremes of the city (cf. Mt. 10:28 and the use of Gehenna (γέεννα)). In the first instance in 1:8-19, the wickedness is literally outside the city, whereas in 9:13-18, although the foolish woman is in the city, she exists in alienation from lady wisdom who has built her house (9:1). Both examples of wickedness present a choice to the reader: What will you belong to? The city of wisdom or a Sheol of lawlessness? Finally, it can be said that Waltke's outline is an excellent example of a unified literary approach. But he does not focus on city elements and downplays their unifying theme across the book. For example, regarding the appearance of wisdom in his outline at the gates in 1:20 and Ch. 8, Waltke states, "B/B′ uniquely personify Solomon's wisdom as a heavenly being, and both uniquely address the gullible at the city gate."[85] This is undoubtedly true, but his outline emphasizes the ethical state of the gullible humans rather than the architectural and political contributions of the city's background.

With the variety of outlines and many more presented in scholarship, it is easy to fall into a negative sentiment regarding the possibility of a definitive outline. Lucas laments, "There is no consensus about the reason for the order of the ten sections and the 'interludes.' There is no obvious development or thought or thematic arrangement."[86] With respectful disagreement, the fourth and final outline of Proverbs 1-9 will now be presented as an original contribution with the idea of the image of the city in view. In contrast to the historical-critical approaches of other

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84 Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, 13.

85 Ibid., 12

86 Ernest C. Lucas, *Proverbs*, *Two-Horizons Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2015), 4.

scholars, this paper will argue that Proverbs 1-9 is an intentionally created literary whole which manifests a unity of purpose, namely the description of the godly or ideal city, delineating its aims and manifestations via wisdom.

(1) General introduction and the forlorn road outside the city, Solomon's discourse #1 (1:1-19)
(2) The first invitation of wisdom at the entrance of the city (1:20-33)
(3) The ways of the city, Solomon's discourse #2 (2:1-22)
(4) The wise ways of the city manifest a new Eden, Solomon's discourse #3 (3:1-35)
(5) The wise ways of the city part 2, Solomon's discourse #4 (4:1-27)
(6) Faithfulness in the city, Solomon's discourse #5 (5:1-23)
(7) The neighbor in the city, Solomon's discourse #6 (6:1-35)
(8) The night of the seductress on the city streets, Solomon's discourse #7 (7:1-27)
(9) The second invitation of wisdom at the gate of the city (8:1-36)
(10) The zenith: the establishment of the city with wisdom in the heights (9:1-18)

The outline above helps retain city ideas and other traditional themes in the text. It will also be important in the next chapter, where the ten divisions presented will become ten political categories, which will be examined in greater detail under the rubric of the transformation of wisdom.

The City Narrative of Proverbs

The idea or image of the city throughout the book of Proverbs is not a static description, as has already been alluded to, but rather is a dynamic, transformative, and complex rhetorical undertaking, contributing to the goal of a more political reading of the wisdom genre. It demonstrates a performative tendency and can usefully be understood, along with its general arguments of wisdom, as an especially perlocutionary text. Within this dynamic sensibility, the idea of narrative is also present. That is, like a traditional story, wisdom in the city and characters within Proverbs experience crises that become resolved into a denouement.

As has been noted in the wisdom city outline above, the discourses of chapters 1-9 do not begin with the city but with Sheol and thieves. Likewise, rhetorically, the book starts with an

implied crisis: wisdom should be understood and more greatly received, especially by the "son"

and "sons" of Solomon. In essence, the book of Proverbs is a speech with both a malady

presented and a means of resolution offered.

What the narrative implies, then, is that *wisdom transforms*. It takes the dire reality of

Sheol and unfaithfulness and transmutes it into a faithful, just, and wise city, with its center

being the Lord (Proverbs 18). Later in the book, this progress can also be seen via the appearance

of the *wisdom refrain* of Van Leeuwen in ch. 24. Van Leeuwen's refrain involves the triadic

appearance of the concepts: wisdom-understanding-knowledge in a distinct pattern throughout

Scripture. The late arrival of the wisdom refrain in the book should come as no surprise. This

fact implies that the crisis of the earlier part of the book has now been partially resolved by an

embrace of Lady Wisdom, by choosing her house at the heights of the city, and most

importantly, recognizing that the 'Name of the Lord,' and all of the associated theology and

practice, standing at the center of the city. It is as if the reader has been traveling through the

city, has passed by such landmarks, and now understands the city's theological character, and

can live within it wisely, as Proverbs 24:3-4 reads:

> By *wisdom* a house is built,
>   and by *understanding* it is established;
> by *knowledge* the rooms are filled
>   with all precious and pleasant riches.[87]

Concerning these verses, Van Leeuwen says, "Here the wise building of any human

house, not just of a temple or tabernacle, presupposes God's wise work of creation and harmony

with it."[88] Thus, the 'house' of Proverbs 24:3-4 is not the temple or even the entire city, but a

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[87] The text has been italicized per Van Leeuwen's emphasis.

[88] Van Leeuwen, "Building God's House: An Exploration in Wisdom," in *The Way of Wisdom*, 207

typical inhabitant's home within the city where wisdom is exalted. The house may also be symbolic of all human forms of polity. The appearance of the wisdom refrain is significant, as it represents an intertextual echo. As an outside slogan, it should cause the reader to stop and notice that something has changed in the progression of the text. In particular, it shows a progression towards the denouement of the book, namely the establishment of wisdom in the city.

The progression of wisdom continues and is completed in the book's final chapter (31). Typically and at a popular level, chapter 31 is understood as a text that can serve as an ideal for biblical womanhood and is often treated as such in books and at conferences. No doubt, there are many positive implications for such occasions. However, this chapter describes much more than this. It is the final denouement of the crisis between foolishness and wisdom. In chapter 31, wisdom is established in the city; established in the gate. Steinmann describes this section's poetic contribution when he observes, "This poem is a highly structured composition. It is a complete acrostic: each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, covering the total of the twenty-two Hebrew letters."[89] The excellent woman in this chapter can be understood to be the implied choice of the earlier challenge to the sons of Solomon: lady wisdom or lady folly? Regardless of the exact identity of the woman, the point made here is that the correct choice has been made and now provides a blessing instead of a curse in the gate of the city.

How the text demonstrates the victory of wisdom is shown by what happens within the gates. It is not in their presence that the conflict in Proverbs is resolved (although their place in the text does form the city's inclusio). Instead, the reader is told two important things. First, her

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[89] Andrew Steinmann, *Proverbs. Concordia Commentary* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2009), 639.

husband has become established in the gates: "Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land" (Prov. 31:23). Second, wisdom has not only been established but is now celebrated as verse 31 proclaims, "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates." In 1:20-21 and ch. 3 (and 8) wisdom cries aloud, inviting the simple to be transformed into the sophisticated, by chapter 31 that is exactly what has happened, "…the praise of the fruits of her life is *in* (בְּ) the gate."[90] The people received and internalized the cry of wisdom: the Wisdom City has been established.

Another functional possible layer of interpretation of the ending of Proverbs 31 is that the man and woman in the section are types of Adam and Eve.[91] The excellent wife (אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל), introduced in 31:1, can be considered a redeemed Eve. Now, driven by godly wisdom, she has fulfilled her role as a city-builder, along with her husband. Unlike in the garden, where Eve leads her husband into temptation to eat the fruit, the woman, by her excellence and nobility as a servant of Yahweh's wisdom, establishes her husband as a city-builder and city-ruler. An innertexual echo comes to mind, although it is not directly quoted in this section, namely that of Proverbs 3:18, "She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed." One point to be made is that the personification of wisdom present in chapter 31 is not a random choice but rather is seated in and identified with the city. As Proverbs states, "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give

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[90] Andrew Steinmann, *Proverbs. Concordia Commentary*, 15.

[91] See Rebecca S. Beal. "Bonaventure as a Reader of Endings: The Commentary on Ecclesiastes" *Franciscan Studies*, no. 65 (2007): 30. Although she examines Bonaventure's hermeneutic related to the ending of Ecclesiastes, her insight is applicable to Proverbs as well: "Bonaventure, however, seems alone in implying that what Scripture and poetry share is a form, and indeed, a form in which endings matter." Beal's approach is useful for its contribution to understanding the potential for a narratival reading in the wisdom genre.

her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates (בַשְּׁעָרִים)' (Proverbs 31:31).[92]

Conclusion

The image of the city in the book of Proverbs supports the idea that the wisdom genre should be read politically. The city background guides the reader toward a better understanding of the personifications, speeches, and axiomatic material in the book's foreground. Although the city is presented as a literary device, it is essentially defined by its theological nature. This fact provides the reader with counsel to understand how a society may be formed and maintained according to the "fear of the Lord."

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[92] The information in this paragraph was adapted from a research paper by the author of this dissertation for BIBL 860 at Liberty University.

CHAPTER 3: WISDOM TRANSFORMATION

Overview

The political discourse of the wisdom genre, especially as presented in Proverbs, emerges through the interposition of the background image of the Wisdom City and the foreground content of various discourses and wisdom sayings. Teasing out such content requires a careful and methodical approach, which will involve two major steps: an examination of the (1) internal pedagogy (i.e., the relationship between chapters 1-9 and 10-31) and (2) the external pedagogy of the text (i.e., the relationship between the book of Proverbs and the rest of Scripture). This chapter will examine the internal pedagogy of the text in detail, leaving external matters to Chapter 4. The word *pedagogy* is used here to indicate the function of the text first, as it highlights the role of chapters 1-9 in instructing the reader how to approach chapters 10-31 and second teaching how the book of Proverbs relates to the broader task of a political reading across Scripture.

The Internal Pedagogy of the Text (the Relationship Between 1-9 & 10-31)

Such pedagogy involves complex matters, including key themes, poetic structures, and performative moves in the text. The matter is greatly simplified if one considers the complexities of pedagogy under one singular and significant word: *transformation*. If Chapter 2 dealt with the text of Proverbs statically by describing its structure, Chapter 3 will examine its transformative or dynamic nature. Both chapters contribute to a political reading of the wisdom genre by expositing the contributions of the city image toward the hermeneutical and canonical needs of the reader.

Previously, this paper mentioned the importance of Proverbs 1:20-21 (the wisdom invitation). This reference stands at the beginning of personified wisdom's first discourse, which

some see merely as an excursus or interlude. Against that trend in the scholarly conversation, this paper will argue that not only is 1:20-21 the essential primary reference that defines the Wisdom City but that the entire discourse of wisdom, 1:20-33, is instrumental in defining wisdom and providing the hermeneutical key of transformation.[93] The particular aspect of this text that teaches the reader such a formula can be summed up in the phrase: *simple to sophisticated*.[94] This one short phrase is simultaneously descriptive of the aim of wisdom but also provides a transformative rhetorical formula that unlocks the text of Proverbs and other wisdom and related texts by establishing a generic type or a set of generic rubrics. The strength of this phrase as an expository key is that it is built from textual terms and progressions as an exegetical insight and is not imposed on the book from outside the text.

The aim of the book of Proverbs is to lead the reader, regardless of their starting point, from being simple (פֶּתִי) to being sophisticated (חָכָם).[95] The fulfillment of Wisdom's invitation in 1:21-23 grants the very spirit of wisdom (1:23b). Wisdom's words will be made known to them (1:23c), and those who listen will "dwell secure" (1:33) in the city. Not only does such a promise fulfill the general aim(s) of the book's prologue (1:1-7), but it also leads the student of wisdom into a state of sophistication, namely of being wise or possessing wisdom and its implied blessings.

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[93] Steinmann referred to it as the "first poem about wisdom." See Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 77.

[94] For the purposes of memorability, this dissertation will describe the *simple to sophisticated* model as the *wisdom formula*.

[95] Koptak usefully expanded on the contrast between the simple and the fool stating, "Wisdom's first address also uses terms from the prologue (Prov. 1:4, 7); the 'simple' (1:4) can learn if they leave their simple ways behind (the Heb. root for "entice" in 1:10 is ptʾ, 'simple'), but if they love those ways and hate knowledge, they become fools who hate wisdom and discipline (1:7). Mockers do not merely choose to ignore; their rejection is active; they scoff and ridicule (cf. Ps. 1:1)." See Koptak, *Proverbs*, 85–86.

An Exegesis of Proverbs 1:20-33

With the 'wisdom formula' in mind, it is useful to turn to wisdom's discourse in 1:20-33 in more detail before describing the text's pedagogy. This key text especially helps to establish the move to read the wisdom genre politically. As mentioned in chapter 2, the book of Proverbs presents the image of a city with thieves leading to Sheol outside the city. By contrast, Lady Wisdom stands at the entrance of the city, offering a very different vision of life. Regarding these two backgrounds, Koptak observes, "…the key words of the prologue (wisdom, simple, fools) are in Wisdom's speech but not in the words of the gang…"[96] Wisdom's discourse is shown to be all the more critical after considering the evil of thieves.

Because of its importance, examining several outlines of this section is helpful. The first is provided by Steinmann, who argues for a "tightly constructed chiasm."[97]

> A   Wisdom addresses the crowds (1:20–21)
>   B   Wisdom calls out to fools (1:22)
>   C   Wisdom's invitation and offer (1:23)
>   D   Wisdom's offer was rejected (1:24–25)
>   E   Wisdom's condemnation (1:26–27)
>   D′   Wisdom's reaction to those who rejected her offer (1:28–30)
>   C′   The consequence of not accepting Wisdom's invitation (1:31)
>   B′   Wisdom speaks about the self-destruction of fools (1:32)
> A′   Wisdom addresses the crowds (1:33)

Koptak offers a slightly different, albeit complementary, structure, dividing the pericope into three sections built around the concept of the word *call*.

> (1) "Wisdom **calls** aloud in the street" (1:20-23)
> (2) "You rejected me when I **called**" (1:24-27)
> (3) "Then they will **call** to me but I will not answer" (1:28-33)[98]

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[96] Koptak, *Proverbs, The NIV Application Commentary*, 84.

[97] Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 81.

[98] Koptak, *Proverbs, The NIV Application Commentary*, 85.

Both of these approaches are useful since they note the expression of Lady Wisdom's speech as a literary unit that contributes to the surrounding text. Also, it brings out another essential facet of the pericope, namely 'choice' theology similar to Deuteronomy 27-28, Psalm 1, and Proverbs 8. The condemnation that Steinmann highlights in his chiastic outline echoes the negative (curse) side of the equation. Verse 31 alone, but dramatically, provides the other side: the promise of blessing. With such echoes in mind, it can be said that the Wisdom City is also the covenant city.[99]

The Prologue as Introductory

Arthur Keefer, in his work *Proverbs 1-9 as an Introduction to the Book of Proverbs,* delineates two significant approaches to reading chapters 1-9. Understanding these views helps frame the discussion for a more politically informed reading of the wisdom genre. The first view he references is that of the prologue as an independent work. Such an approach argues that chapters 1-9 were constructed independently from the remainder of the text of Proverbs. They were added much later and did not contribute significantly to the structure and the work as a unified whole.

In contrast to the independent view, Keefer offers a second approach, which he champions in his work, describing the prologue as an intentional introductory unit skillfully integrated with the rest of the book. Keefer summarizes his view as follows: "I argue that Proverbs 1-9 is that very portion of Proverbs which provides insights into the terse sayings and certain perplexities of the book, that it functions didactically by helping its audience to understand the material in Proverbs 10-31."[100] Although Keefer does not focus on city themes in

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[99] The book of Proverbs is to some degree Deuteronomy applied, particularly as a manifestation of the wisdom commission from Deuteronomy chapter 4.

[100] Keefer, *Proverbs 1-9 as an Introduction to the Book of Proverbs*, 3.

his work, his argument regarding the prologue's foundational nature complements this dissertation's thesis.

Keefer's argument is complex; he offers a positive comparative vision with literary works beyond Proverbs to demonstrate the functionality of prologues, whether from the biblical text or from the broader collection of ancient Near Eastern literature, to buttress his arguments. He states, "Prologues in Ecclesiastes, Job, and some non-biblical ancient Near Eastern texts support the hypothesis that Proverbs 1-9 functions as a didactic guide for 10-29."[101] Regarding Job, Keefer argues that the frame of Job 1-2, on the one hand, matches with 42:7-17 providing the needed foundation for interpretation which, "… producing theological and hermeneutical tensions that, according to some scholars, actually create the message of the book."[102] Next, he surveys the *Instruction of Ptahhotep*, *Instructions of Amenemope*, and even *Ben Sira*.

Regarding Proverbs, he saw the exact utility of the framing functions mentioned in the general introduction of the book, namely in 1:1-7 when he states, "At this point, a closer look at the language of 1:1-7 will both validate and clarify the possible function of 1-9 and the best point of entry into Proverbs."[103] Keefer's argument here is excellent, and it is hard to dispute his position since the first few verses explicitly reveal most of the book's aims. With sensitivity to the proposed city-centered image of Proverbs, it can be argued that Proverbs 1:20-21 fulfills this function equally or perhaps better. Thus, building on Keefer's insight into the importance of frames used toward a literary aim, it can be said that the invitation of Lady Wisdom to transform the simple into the sophisticated in 1:20-21 provides as good or even better-controlling aim for

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[101] Keefer, *Proverbs 1-9 as an Introduction to the Book of Proverbs*, 7.

[102] Ibid., 8.

[103] Ibid., 4

the remainder of the literature, whether through to chapter 9 or 31. Keefer's argument regarding 1:1-7 does not need to be excluded; rather, it complements the city's vision of reading and is commended to the reader.

<div align="center">The Functions of the Prologue</div>

With the proposed outline of the Wisdom City and the nature of the prologue introduced, the function of the prologue can now be examined. Such a function is an important consideration for understanding the nature of the political reading of the genre. The previous sections dealt with a summary of the material, but the question now can be asked: "In particular, how does this literature work to produce meaning for the reader?" Several significant ideas will be explored to answer this question: (1) as a primer on the basics of wisdom (teaching role), (2) as a preparation for understanding 10-31, (3) as self-satire on Solomon's life, (4) as a polemic against ancient Near Eastern parallels.

The first function sees the prologue as contributing to the basics of theology, philosophy, and political thought, mainly through the lens of wisdom. The pattern of wisdom throughout Scripture involves both historical and archetypal trends. In the books of Proverbs, this manifestation is primarily archetypal, showing what is possible. In part due to this understanding, the implied audience of the book of Proverbs need not be restricted to the recipients of royal instruction but rather to "simple ones," "scoffers," and "fools" (Prov. 1:22).[104] Keefer, referencing Sandoval made exactly this point as follows, "Yet he reveals a significant rhetorical strategy in Proverbs: the author intends to identify and align his audience with an ideal

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[104] Dunham explained, "Second, the prologue is addressed to the peti, a term that denotes the inexperienced youth on the threshold of liminal entry into the realm of independent adulthood." Dunham's emphasis on the youthfulness of the ideal recipient of Proverbs may be unnecessarily emphasized due to Dunham's view of Proverbs as merely an educational program, rather than a guidebook for everyone (all the simple) towards establishing the ideal city. See Kyle C. Dunham, "Structure and Theology in Proverbs: Its Function as an Educational Program for Novice Leaders in Ancient Israel," *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2019): 373.

recipient."[105] This ideal recipient is the canonical reader, who can fill the role of a 'son' or daughter of Solomon.

The second function is preparatory, equipping the reader to understand and navigate the material in chapters 10-31 (This view is dependent on the introductory function of the prologue, as previously argued by Keefer.). This view introduces the reader to essential concepts, themes, tropes, and wisdom conventions to prepare them to understand the material of 10-31. Chapters 1-9 become educational, providing a key or hermeneutic to understand the progression of the work.

A third possibility regarding the function of the prologue is that it is intended as a self-satire on the life of Solomon. This approach was advanced by Johnny Miles in a monograph entitled *Wise King – Royal Fool*, albeit with a different scope and intended end.[106] His work represents a postmodern approach to interpreting the book of Proverbs and is not entirely endorsed by this dissertation (He describes his work as belonging to "postmodern semiotics" while explicitly rejecting modernist semiotics.).[107] However, his argument has value in that it seeks to understand the possible role of satire in the prologue.

Miles' contribution revolves around his argument that Proverbs 1-9 is subversive. Building on this insight and working with the assumption of Solomonic authorship, it may be argued (contra Miles) that Solomon was critiquing himself. What critique might he be making? One possibility is that Solomon is making a similar move to that of Ecclesiastes, albeit cast in a different mood. In Ecclesiastes, he concludes, "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear

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[105] Arthur Keefer, "A Shift in Perspective: The Intended Audience and a Coherent Reading of Proverbs 1:1-7," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 136, No. 1 (2017): 108.

[106] The information in this section was adapted from a research paper by the author of this dissertation for OBST 860 at Liberty University.

[107] Miles, "Wise King-- Royal Fool: Semiotics, Satire and Proverbs 1-9," 15.

God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccles. 12:13 – ESV). In a similar manner, the prologue of Proverbs ends with the confession (on the lips of Lady Wisdom), "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight" (Prov. 9:10). He realizes that he is a sinner and falls short of the invitation of wisdom, despite his best efforts in life. When he wrote the prologue, although he began his writing with instructions to his son(s), his teachings gave way little by little to the voice of wisdom. It is as if wisdom interrupts him and escalates his teaching, with wisdom herself giving way to a confession of the monotheistic God of Israel (9:10). Although this move is similar between Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, it must be admitted that Proverbs does so in the context of positivity in contrast to Ecclesiastes' somber vision of life.

The final function of the prologue may be polemical. Much has been made of ancient Near Eastern parallels in Old Testament scholarship. The reverse use may also be considered, as one scholar, John Currid, has done in his *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament*. Currid usefully begins with his definition of polemics in the present context, "Polemical theology is the use by biblical writers of the thought forms and stories that were common in ancient Near Eastern culture while filling them with radically new meaning."[108] As mentioned, writers such as Whybray and others have argued for significant borrowing from Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources in the book of Proverbs. In contrast to such views, it is possible Solomon intended to use a leitmotif of Egyptian thought and phraseology to make a polemical point in the manner suggested by Currid. Currid argues, "The biblical authors take

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[108] John D. Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament*, 25.

well-known expressions and motifs from the ancient Near Eastern milieu and apply them to the person and work of Yahweh, and not to the other gods of the ancient world."[109]

How, then, would Solomon, as Currid suggests, apply such expressions to the mono-theistic literature and wisdom traditions of Israel? If Whybray and others are right in arguing that 'son' language is distinct and especially pointed at royal instruction, in the same vein as the Egyptians, it would also assume that such literature could not fully import the full implication of a pharaonic dynasty. In the Egyptian world, the Pharaoh was considered a god, and his sons were likewise candidates for the divine throne. In the prologue, contrary to Whybray's "Book of Ten Discourses" idea, the reader is given a series of discourses from Solomon, which leads to a very different conclusion: that the instruction of the father is not absolute. Rather, all instruction must be based in the wisdom which comes from Yahweh as described in the zenith of the prologue: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight" (ESV). The impact of such a move is to demote the earthly ruler and his associated wisdom from divine claim. A polemical argument here would advance the conclusion that if Solomon is not God, neither is Pharaoh.[110]

Whether this polemical purpose is true or not is difficult to say. It is possible because Solomon's life intersects with those of the Egyptian courts. Whether or not Solomon was interested in creating subtle polemics against Egyptian theocracy and its pantheistic hierarchy is a matter that requires more historical data than is presently available.

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[109] John D. Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament*, 25.

[110] The information in this paragraph was adapted from a research paper by the author of this dissertation for OBST 860 at Liberty University.

The Literary Map of Proverbs

Before analyzing the aims and fulfillment of the text, it is helpful to introduce the idea of

a literary or rhetorical map of the book. Such a map contributes to the question of a political

reading of the wisdom genre by showing the poetic methodology involved. Proverbs uses many

rhetorical features to communicate its message, including discourse and poetry. The discourse

elements are primarily found in chapters 1-9, but poetic features of the text are spread throughout

the work from chapters 1-31 (including within the discourse sections). Helpfully, Waltke

summarizes the most important scope of rhetorical concepts to be considered regarding Proverbs

when he states, "Aside from the editorial superscriptions, all the lines (or verses) are composed

according to the restraints that characterize biblical poetry—that is, terseness, imagery, and

parallelism."[111]

As Waltke highlights, an important yet often overlooked facet of poetry in Scripture is

that of terseness. This is especially true of the book of Proverbs, which, through its short sayings,

exemplifies and celebrates its short yet portable phraseology. Terseness, according to several

scholars, often does not come through well into English translations which seek to smooth over

the difficulty of proverbial language by adding additional words. Waltke explains, "In Proverbs,

terseness becomes even more acute; it is the hallmark of its lines. The sage teaches truth through

aphorisms (a terse formulation of a truth)…."[112]

Imagery is perhaps one of the most essential facets of Hebrew poetry in general and

helpful specifically for the current political investigation of the wisdom genre centered in

Proverbs. Longman's observation is helpful when he states, "The book of Proverbs itself is full of

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[111] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, Chapters 1–15, 38.

[112] Ibid.

difficult sayings and occasional enigmas. It is filled with imagery, which by its very nature is

indirect language."[113] The significant use of imagery helps the reader develop a hermeneutical

strategy for the book and provides a foundation to understand Proverbs as political discourse.

Although it is not always as straightforward as some modern political treatises, if the reader pays

attention to the specific methodology (use of imagery), the political claims of the text will

emerge.

One of the most critical poetic tools used in Proverbs is parallelism, a common technique

applied by writers of Hebrew poetry across the Old Testament. It is mainly used in the form of

bicola, which constitutes the form of most of the aphoristic material. The parallelism of the text

can be further divided into synonymous, anti-thetic, synthetic, and other miscellaneous types.[114]

William P. Brown, in his discussion of the pedagogical use of rhetoric in the book, states, "It is

recognized, for example, that the sayings in Proverbs 10-15 are largely cast in antithetical

parallelism, whereas chapters 16-22 exhibit primarily synonymous parallelism. In addition,

paronomasia, catchwords, synonym sequences, wordplays, and repetitions serve as mnemonic

devices linking halves of verses or associating one verse with the next."[115]

As argued, parallelism is an essential feature of Hebrew poetry. A related technique

known as juxtaposition is likewise important, especially in Proverbs. Murphy notes, "An

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[113] Longman, *How to Read Proverbs*, 18.

[114] Murphy cautioned regarding parallelism, "The traditional threefold distinction between synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic that has come down from the days of Bishop Lowth, has been recently refined, or even transformed, by the studies of M. P. O'Connor, J. Kugel, and A. Berlin." See Murphy, *Proverbs*, xxiii.

[115] William P. Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. William P. Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002), 152.

important feature that strengthens the phenomenon of parallelism of the sayings is the juxtaposition of nouns and predicates or nominal sentences."[116]

Another important rhetorical feature is the use of the alphabet, whether used explicitly (acrostic) or implicitly (alphabetizing). The most famous acrostic occurs at the end of the book, contained within 31:10-31. A more subtle use of the alphabet is identified by Roland Murphy, who argues that chapter 2 is constructed according to the 22 (or 23) letters of the Hebrew alphabet without referencing the letters at the beginning of each line. He summarizes this use as follows, "The alphabetizing poem (e.g., Prov 2:1–22 and see the commentary below) is so-called because it consists of twenty-two lines (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet) or also twenty-three lines."[117] If Murphy's argument regarding an early alphabet-like structure of chapter 2 is valid, along with the explicit acrostic of chapter 31, it would appear that an alphabetic inclusio of sorts is present in the work.[118] Koptak usefully summarizes the potential rhetorical purpose of alphabetic structures used in Hebrew poetry:

> The acrostic structure may highlight the idea of completion or comprehensiveness as does our saying, "Everything from A to Z." If so, the structure of this chapter may itself be a way of stating that everything that needs to be said about this topic is said here in this book.[119]

Such alphabetic rhetoric implies that the Wisdom City themes contained within the book provide a sort of center or complete foundation to Scripture's political vision, from A to Z.

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[116] Murphy, *Proverbs, vol. 22, Word Biblical Commentary*, xxiii.

[117] Ibid., xxiv.

[118] Other alphabetic or "nonalphabetic" acrostic structures have been proposed. See Koptak, *Proverbs*, 97. He states, "This use of a nonalphabetic acrostic format shows up again in chapter 5; some even think it appears at the conclusion of the instructions (Prov. 8:32–9:18). Clearly Proverbs concludes with an alphabetic acrostic in chapter 31, highlighting the importance of beginning and ending sections." Similarly, Victor Avigdor Hurowitz argues for the presence of a nonacrostic pattern in chapter 24:1-22 (see Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "An Often Overlooked Alphabetic Acrostic in Proverbs 24:1-22", *Revue Biblique*, Vol. 107, No. 4 (October 2000): 526-540.

[119] Koptak, *Proverbs*, 97.

Finally, it can be said that although the material above seeks to catalog the variety of techniques used in Proverbs, no such list can fully convey the book's entirety. As a complex and sophisticated work of literature, Proverbs is resilient against attempts to hyper-systematize the book's contents. Nonetheless, this brief study of the textual landscape and rhetorical technology of the work provides a helpful understanding for the following sections, which will explore the aims of the text (chapters 1-9) and their associated manifestations (chapters 10-31).

Figure 7 maps the various rhetorical categories as previously mentioned across the text of Proverbs. Proverbs 1-9, highlighted in bright blue, show the discourse nature of the prologue. Likewise, the *a* letter in chapter 2 reflects the idea of an alphabetic structure in the chapter. In chapters 10-15, the orange-colored cells primarily comprise antithetical parallelism. Chapters 16-22, shown in blueish gray, highlight the use of synonymous parallelism. Finally, chapters 23 through 31 (darker blue squares) contain more complex forms of poetry. In chapter 31, the "*a*" designation represents the final acrostic structure in the book's finale.

Figure 7: Rhetorical Map of Proverbs Chapters 1-31[120]

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[120] Steinman helpfully charts the growth of Proverbs by various contributors in the following order: Solomon, Hezekiah's men, Lemuel, and Agur. Regarding Proverbs 31:10-31, he argues that a final editor other than

The Ideals of Chapters 1-9

Previously, chapters 1-9 have been described as introductory. This notion can be taken further by arguing that they are also foundational. The ideas presented in this section define the political ideals and characteristics of the ideal Wisdom City. They also set up the categories and aims the remainder of the book will attempt to fulfill.

It is argued by Strathmann that "There is in the OT no trace whatever of the world of ideas which the Gks. associated with πολις.… The importance of cities [in Israel] lay in the resistance they could offer to aggressors because of their fortifications, in the protection they could give to their inhabitants."[121] Such a notion represents a partial truth; no doubt the cities in ancient Israel were not synonymous with their Greco counterparts. But this does not mean that the goal or telos of Hebraic cities can be reduced merely to the "protection they could give to their inhabitants." Not only does such a claim lack imagination, but it also does not do justice to the richness of the texts relating to cities in the Old Testament, particularly chapters 1-9 of the book of Proverbs, which delivers, albeit in poetic form, the aims, purposes, and conceptual frames of an ideal city.

Poetic characterizations of systematic topoi are understandably challenging. Poetry often exhibits great complexity. Nonetheless, material that is intended to be received and understood must be assumed to possess the means of clarity. In chapters 1-9, the reader is told over and over,

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Agur created the material and added it as a finale to the book "between 686 and 457 bc." Although Steinmann's argument is sophisticated and useful, it seems unlikely that a much later editor added 31:10-31 due to its importance as the final half of the "gate inclusio" holding the entire book together (assuming the city outline of the book is valid). See Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 18-19.

[121] Hermann Strathmann, "Πόλις, Πολίτης, Πολιτεύομαι, Πολιτεία, Πολίτευμα," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 523. As originally referenced by Carl Schultz, "1615 עִיר," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 664 (Via Logos Software). Schultz references Strathmann's article in his description of the Hebrew term for city.

"Hear, my son…" (1:8) or "be attentive" (4:1), or finally stands the reminder of the public and loud cry of wisdom at the city gates (1:20). Amidst many other such examples, it can be said that a description of poetry in Proverbs as cryptic should be excluded from an interpretation of its contents. Because of this expected clarity, this paper will argue that there is one significant unifying idea to the prologue, along with 10 supporting ideals the text introduces as controlling and foundational. With the clarity of the disclaimer mentioned above, it should still be noted that other themes may also be present in the poetic prologue of chapters 1-9, so the following list should be considered exhaustive but incomplete. The points below should be considered the most prominent peaks of a mountain range. Emphasizing them as landmarks should not detract from lesser peaks nearby. With such an analogy in mind, the remainder of this section will provide a case-by-case exposition of each of the following aims:

> The general ideal:
> (G) That the Simple City would Become the Wise City (1:20-22)
>
> The specific ideals:
> (1) Establishment of Justice, Especially for the Innocent (1:11)
> (2) Establishment of the City (dwelling vs. dread) (1:33)
> (3) To walk in the good Way of the Wisdom City (2:20)
> (4) To Establish a New Eden (3:18)
> (5) To Establish Proper Authority ("crown") (4:9)
> (6) The Faithful Assembly (5:14)
> (7) The Exaltation of the Neighbor (the Wisdom Society) (6:3)
> (8) Allegiance to Wisdom (7:4)
> (9) The Creation of the City as a Divine Echo of Creation (8:31)
> (10) Building the Heights, or the Prominence, of the City (9:1)

Each of the eleven categories listed reflects the central Wisdom City outline units of chapters 1-9 presented in chapter 2. Each point in the list represents arguably the main or singular idea of each one of those 10 discourse sections, spanning from 1:1 to 9:18, and includes a reference to a summary verse.

Reading and relating the aphoristic material of chapters 10-31 comes with its challenges, covering a vast amount of ground, literary devices, and interpretive possibilities. No small amount of ink has been poured over the centuries in attempting to understand, systematize, and categorize the wisdom content of this section. The famous preacher J. Vernon McGree frames the challenge helpfully when he stated, "Some people are inclined to read the book of Proverbs very much like the man who said, 'I enjoy reading the dictionary, but the stories certainly are short.'"[122] Although his comment is sweetened with humor, it reveals the reductionistic reading strategy many use when approaching this section of the book. As discussed in the survey of the scholarship of wisdom genre in Chapter 1, many read the aphoristic material of this section out of context, almost as "short stories," to use McGee's phrase. Unfortunately, because of this, the narrative context of the material is lost, but so is the relationship between the aims of the prologue (chapters 1-9) and the remainder of the book. Van Leeuwen and Brown observe the complexity of this relationship, "Raymond C. Van Leeuwen notes that the Solomonic 'subcollections' indicate a move from a simple to a 'more complex view of acts and consequences'…"[123] Arguably, this can be observed in two aspects of the text. The first development occurs between the prologue (chs. 1-9) and the remainder of the book. Second, the proverbial material in 10-31 also becomes more complex, with longer and more complex poetic formations appearing as the book progresses. The eleven political categories will now be exposited according to an aim (from Chapters 1-9) and their manifestation (via the wisdom collection of 10-31) building on the aforementioned outline.

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[122] J. Vernon McGee, *Proverbs* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 13.

[123] William P. Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. William P. Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002), 153 fn. 12.

(G) That the Simple City would Become the Wise City (1:20-22)

Aim: Lady Wisdom calls for the transformation of the city from various forms of simplicity, whether foolishness, laziness, or rebellion (e.g. exegetical examination of this aim at the beginning of the chapter).

Manifestation in 10-31: The first general ideal or goal, encompassing the entire outline of chapters 1-9 and summarizing the intended impact of the prologue, was aptly described in the previous section of this chapter as the goal of transformation of moving the simple to sophistication. Although this transformative goal is deeply present in chs. 10-31 through the content and technique of the section, several notable examples will be brought into focus. One of the most vivid and comprehensive examples is that of Proverbs 11:11, which reads:

> By the blessing of the upright a city[124] is exalted,
> but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown.

This is a bi-colon proverb expressed via antithetical parallelism. It demonstrates the fundamental difference between the simple and the sophisticated. The first cola describes the sophisticated city by the presence of the upright. In the aggregate, they bring blessings to the city. By way of contrast, the second line contradicts the scenario of the first. Rather than a blessing, the city that has the unfortunate encounter with the mouth of the wicked is overthrown, a fate even worse than the opposite of exaltation. The city is lost because of the wicked. This example is parallel to the exceedingly creative works of God. In Genesis, God creates by speaking and blesses his creation, as here in this Proverb, the people of God also bless by their speaking and, by doing so, 'exalt' or maintain the creation, which is the city. By way of contrast, the words of the wicked

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[124] In Hebrew, the word translated as city is קֶרֶת, a more generic term focusing on all cities, villages, or human habitations.

have an anti-creative effect, deconstructing and destroying the excellent thing that God has provisioned in creation.

(1) Establishment of Justice, Especially for the Innocent (1:11)

Aim: The idea of justice is found throughout Scripture, represented by multiple words, concepts, and ends. Thus, it is no simple matter to summarize the concept quickly. In the context of Proverbs chapters 1-9, it can be generally described as either (1) that which makes life right or (2) that which recompenses an improper loss. The catch-verse for this aim reads, "If they say, 'Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent(נָקִי) without reason…'" (1:11). Although stated negatively, the scenario of deprivation of justice is found within the previously mentioned drama outside the Wisdom City, textually speaking. Solomon's initial charge to his son is to avoid the brigands who promote injustice in this world, paralleling and partnering with the aims of Sheol.

The sinners of 1:10 entice the son towards murder and theft. Stealing from the poor and innocent, although seemingly less serious, might also lead to death in the ancient world where scarcity ruled. Either way, the outcome of the situation creates a hellish environment that exists against God's intended order of just living. The more direct tie-in to the concept of justice stands in the tension between the stated purpose of the introductory section of 1:1-8 and the remainder of the discourse leading up to 1:19. In 1:3, an express aim of wisdom is to provide the knowledge of justice (מִשְׁפָּט), a concept which itself interweaves Proverbs with a multitude of texts across the entirety of the Old Testament canon.

Another meaningful intertextual echo in this section, found elsewhere in the book, is the Mosaic-styled reminder to the son to keep the father's words on his head or neck. The father's words are to be kept close to the heart and mind, reminiscent of the Torah, where the Hebrews

were encouraged to keep the words of Yahweh close (Deut. 6:8-9). Such references are textual

clues that the reader should consider the content of Proverbs 1-9 very much in light of the Torah,

especially the book of Deuteronomy.

Manifestation in 10-31: The first of the particular aims manifests in the establishment of

justice for the people of the city. Outside of the Wisdom City are the brigands who lay in wait for

those passing by in order to rob or even murder. The father especially warns the son of their evil

invitation, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason;

like Sheol let us swallow them alive..." (Prov. 1:11-12). The warning aims to establish the son's

opposition to those who would commit such injustice upon the way.

One of the first proverbs in the wisdom collection captures, through the terseness and

portability of the aphorism, the fundamental sentiment of justice as a manifestation of the aim of

the prologue:

> Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit,
> but righteousness   delivers from death (Prov. 10:2).

Presented via a straightforward antithetical pattern, the idea of the "treasures" gained here by

wickedness ultimately do not lead to profit. Most importantly, righteousness delivers from death.

Another class of proverbs establishing justice revolves around measuring value and

wealth. False balances are condemned, but "just weight" is godly (Prov. 11:1). Likewise, unequal

weights and measures are an "abomination," along with "false scales" (Prov. 20:10,23). In a rare

instance of humor and hyperbole, the book of Proverbs personifies false appraisal of value in

20:14: "'Bad, bad,' says the buyer, but when he goes away, then he boasts."

(2) Establishment of the City (Dwelling vs. Dread) (1:33)

Aim: It has been argued that the pericope of 1:20-1:33 is a significant introductory

section to the book of Proverbs and an initiator of the idea of the Wisdom City. The final key

verse of section 1:33 provides the resultative summation of the intent of wisdom: "For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."

To "dwell secure" in a city is a major theme of Proverbs, extending the covenant idea of blessing into the central life of Israel. The idea of dwelling secure, whether in a village, through building a new city, or transforming an existing one, was a complex idea involving every aspect of life. In the modern world of conveniences, it is understandable to rush past this promise as significant. However, amidst the difficulties of the ancient world, such as famine, drought, war, foolishness, and lawlessness, it is easy to see the idealism of such a claim. On some level, the phrase "dwell secure" may have been a type of early futurism.[125]

Manifestation in 10-31: Following the narrative of the city outline in the prologue, after the reader encounters the brigands on the way towards the city, along with the hellish portal to Sheol, the city gates come into focus with Lady Wisdom herself standing ready and proclaiming her invitation. This section's aim has been identified primarily as the establishment of the city. The extent of this idea might involve the creation, maintenance, expansion, or rescue of any city or village. This broad application of the wisdom collection has the rhetorical effect of broadening the archetypal city through application to different built environments.

This section of wisdom application functions as a further provision or even an answer to Lady Wisdom's invitation in 1:20-22. How can her words be taken seriously and applied in the

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[125] Moving outward from the immediate city context, the importance of securely dwelling also had implications for understanding of land and the covenant, as Marten's points out, "The relationship of 'life' to land and wisdom materials is not at first obvious. Land is turf: but very early it acquires a symbolic meaning. For Israel, land is the promised land, the good land, and as such is symbolic of a rich quality of life. To be in the land is to be the recipient of the blessings of God." Using Marten's approach, perhaps it can also be said in the context of the book of Proverbs, that *to be in the city is to be the recipient of the blessings of God*. See Martens, *God's Design*, 187.

context of the Wisdom City? One of the most common aphoristic types involves the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. Here, each group stands in for the simple or sophisticated. Likewise, the term 'house' stands in for the establishment of the people in the city. House here means the totality of organized society grouped towards a particular aim. Naturally, such a contrast between two opposing groups lends itself to antithetical parallelism, which is evident through several significant examples:

> The house of the wicked will be destroyed,
> but the tent   of the upright will flourish (Prov. 14:11).

> The wicked are overthrown and are no more,
> but the house of the righteous will stand (Prov. 12:7).

(3) To Walk in the Good Way of the Wisdom City (2:20)

Aim: Building on the literary map of the Wisdom City, which was previously introduced, "the ways" of the city, described as part of the middle-city vocabulary, help to refer to the literal paths between destinations in the city that necessitate moral choice. They also, by extension, can refer to the considerable existential or devotional insights of life. In the context of this city image, the ways of wisdom "guard" the son and keep him from evil, "men of perverted speech," and the "adulteress" with her smooth words. The result is described as follows: "So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous" (2:20). Although much symbolic language is used here, the literal reality of the father's advice should not be lost. Heeding such words, the son may have made different choices with his very feet and destination amidst the city.

The phrase "the way of the good" described here is especially significant. The sentence introduces the common yet loaded notion of the good (טוֹב) into the political idealism of this

section.[126] Introduced early in Scripture the word, טוֹב can be found in the Torah in creation narrative where God sees his creation as "good" (Gen 1:4, 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25). Upon looking at the entirety of his handiwork, God pronounces the result as "very good (מְאֹד וְהִנֵּה־טֹוב)" (1:31).[127] Likewise, the concept of 'good' here echoes the goodness of God's covenant blessing upon the people who are faithful to him. In the Torah, goodness and blessing become intertwined thematically. Finally, goodness can be related to the poetic comparison between the outcomes of the righteous and the wicked, as found in Psalm 1.

Manifestation in 10-31: Within the background image of the Wisdom City, roads have been highlighted as essential elements of the middle city space, the literary space of the city itself. The ways and crossroads of the city may very well have provided literal choices that had real moral consequences. To whose house does one walk? Does one stay in the city or leave? Does one go to the temple or the brothel? Unsurprisingly, the prologue's pleading (chapters 1-9) calls for the sophisticated to travel on wise roads in the city (whether real or metaphorical). The literal versus personal application in these verses does not compete for meaning; instead, both approaches have excellent interpretive value since they provide multi-applicability via the poetic technique of the text.

In Proverbs, the good is represented directly and indirectly. For example, people may be called "the good" (Prov. 14:19) or through a synonym like integrity. The path or the way equals "good," whereas veering away from it results in some form of foolishness (simplicity). The ways of the city are also spoken of indirectly through the mechanism of walking. The first example

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[126] The term appears throughout the introductory section of Proverbs (chs. 1-9) eight times: 2:9, 2:20, 3:4, 3:14, 3:27, 4:2, 8:11, and 8:19.

[127] The Septuagint uses the term ἀγαθάς in Proverbs 2:20.

below can be seen via antithetical parallelism, where the good way is wherever the wise

(sophisticated) are present. One can imagine two groups walking the city streets, one who makes

good choices and the other looking for trouble. These two approaches change the context of a

'way' simply by their respective presences.

> Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise,
> but the companion of fools will suffer harm (Prov. 13:20).

> Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life,
> but he who rejects reproof leads others astray (Prov. 10:17).

> Whoever walks in integrity will be delivered,
> but he who is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall (Prov. 28:18).

The simple or foolish even mistake paths that are not good. In Proverbs 16:25, an example via

antithetical parallelism makes this argument:

> There is a way that seems right to a man,
> but its end is the way to death (Prov. 16:25)

However, for the sophisticated (the upright, those walking securely), there is a way within the

city:

> The highway of the upright turns aside from evil;
> whoever guards his way preserves his life (Prov. 16:17).

> Whoever walks in integrity walks securely,
> but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out (Prov. 10:9).

(4) To Establish a New Eden (3:18)

Aim: In his book *Utopia*, Thomas More attempts to describe the ideal society or city.

Others have sought such an end (cf. Aristotle, Plato, Augustine). Generally speaking, such

literary and philosophical efforts have been met with skepticism due to the futility of their vision,

given the fallenness of man. This is why utopia can be understood as an ideal place or satirically

as 'no place.' But in Proverbs, the Wisdom City, possessing a practical and sober recognition of evil, does not give way to skepticism regarding the possibility of a wisdom-based society.

It can be argued that the entire book of Proverbs is built on the idealism or possibility of life in Yahweh's ordered creation (cf. Ecclesiastes). God intends to bless the world and humankind so that man would be fruitful and govern over this creation with wisdom and enjoyment. Proverbs certainly captures such creational theology and seeks to extend it into detailed possibility. Along those lines, the critical phrase here comes from 3:18, which describes the result of apprehending wisdom: "She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed."[128]

Although garden language is not present in the pericope of 3:1-35, the tree of life reference nonetheless stands at the rough center of the chapter, imitating the text of Genesis, which recounts, "The tree of life was in the midst of the garden…" (Gen. 2:9). The scope of the symbolism of the tree of life in Proverbs has already been discussed in chapter 2. It is important in this section to focus on the implication of its appearance and the related ideal aim it forms for the reader. References to the tree bring back the promise of the garden, which Solomon, in his current discourse, connects to the concept of wisdom itself; thus, the wisdom here is presented as the garden or is garden-like.[129] By extension, if the wisdom of Solomon's words acts as the garden surrounding the Tree of Life, it extends or deepens the city image in this section by

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[128] Murphy describes the rhetoric of this section as, "A kind of hymn about wisdom begins here. The word for "happy" (or "blessed"), אשרי, in v 13 "finds" an inclusion in v 18." Building on his observation, one can argue that this central section of Solmon's discourse is formed in a similar way to the beginning of Psalm 1: "Blessed is the man…." See Murphy, *Proverbs*, 21.

[129] Interestingly, Waltke associates the entire book of Proverbs as the tree of life: "In sum, Proverbs functions symbolically (and provisionally) as the 'tree of life' that was lost in Gen. 2:22–24. By including this metaphor with some prominence, the author makes it clear that until we reach the 'tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (Rev. 2:7), we hold fast to the life-giving wisdom of the book of Proverbs and, more importantly, to Jesus Christ, who supersedes Solomon's wisdom (see pp. 131-132)." See Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 260.

adding a garden of Eden-like inner locus to its midst. In the heart of the Wisdom City is the restored (albeit partially and symbolically) garden (cf. the garden motif in Song of Solomon for an expansion of this idea).

Manifestation in 10-31: As previously discussed in the "aims" of Proverbs 1-9, the book of Proverbs is no stranger to the concept of political idealism. It is no minor theme within Proverbs. Wisdom provides the route for the simple to become sophisticated and, along with this, experience civilizational blessings. Of course, such an end is heavily contested in the book of Ecclesiastes (which will be explored in detail in the next chapter). In Proverbs, negativity is generally reserved for the fate of those who continue in their simplicity and do not heed the words of the invitation of wisdom (1:20-22). The ends of the righteous and wicked, or simple and sophisticated, match the covenantal outcomes promised in Deuteronomy.

The political idealism of the Wisdom City in Proverbs is sober rather than ecstatic or utopian. Sin, failure, foolishness, rebellion, and deprivation are all recognized. Nonetheless, wisdom provides a positive, near and far fulfillment. Several examples make this clear:

> When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more,
> but the righteous is established forever (Prov. 10:25).

> When the righteous triumph, there is great glory,
> but when the wicked rise, people hide themselves (Prov. 28:12).

In some cases, the state of political idealism is expressed through explicit intertextual echoes from Genesis:

> The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
> and whoever captures souls is wise (Prov. 11:30).

> Hope deferred makes the heart sick
> but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life (Prov. 13:12).

Amidst the static description and promises of Proverbs are the descriptions of those with wisdom who *live* in the context of the city. The way they live (with their focus on God and his ways) makes a difference. Interestingly, with its indirect associations with creation via the reference to life, the actions of the wise/righteousness manifest as a fountain. As a symbol, the fountain imitates the city's divine provision of water and life. Likewise, water is the antidote and reversal of wilderness (מִדְבָּר) so that the life of the wise maintains urbanity over and against desolation. The third example below provides an unexpected turn, correcting the wise who "gives way" before the wicked. In this case, the fountain becomes less helpful in sustaining life, having muddied waters (cf. again, the waters of the wilderness), which might not be a potable source because of dirt and mud.

> The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
> but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence (Prov. 10:11).

> The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life
> that one may turn away from the snares of death (Prov. 13:14).

> Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain
> is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked (Prov. 25:26).

Towards the end of the book, another statement of inferred eschatology is given:

> Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out (Prov. 24:19–20).

(5) To Establish Proper Authority ("crown") (4:9)

The next ideal introduced involves the establishment of authority via the device or symbol of the "crown." The section begins with the father and mother's admonition, as in previous introductory phrases in Solomon's discourses. In the previous instance where both the father and mother are mentioned, a similar formula is used, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head

and pendants for your neck" (Prov. 1:8-9). In 4:1-4, a generational echo is introduced with Solomon reminiscing about the advice of his father and mother. This recollection points back to wisdom, which has the power of establishment. Whereas previously in chapter 1, wisdom adorns ornamentally, here in 4:9, the blessing of wisdom is escalated into the trappings of a "beautiful crown" (4:9). The Hebrew construction here uses repetition of the word crown to create a superlative sense.

In this chapter's poetic and canonical context, such a charge can be understood to be generalized or democratized in that the intended audience is the public reader of this text. Thus, the sons of Israel can be considered as those upon whom a crown of authority is given (This fact does not exclude the historical kingship.).

The remainder of the chapter celebrates and expands upon the notion of walking in the ways of wisdom versus foolishness. Again, these 'ways' are analogous to the city context where the King (or prince) might walk. Interestingly, there is an innertextual echo to chapter 1's warning regarding the "way of evil," which parallels the life of the brigands outside the city: "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence" (Prov. 4:14-17). The section concludes with the admonition, "Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil." (Prov. 4:26-27). One can imagine the 'crown' walking with intent towards what is right, not vacillating in his choices to evil on either side.

Manifestation in 10-31: It is one of the primary aims of the prologue, and arguably the book of Proverbs itself, to teach the "son" or "sons" of Solomon the ways of wisdom

(sophistication) so that the rulers of Israel can govern wisely. This was especially noted in the aims of the prologue in the fourth chapter. The manifestation of this aim in 10-31 is extensive. Again, there are both direct and indirect applications of this wisdom. Some aphorisms speak explicitly of a king, while others deal indirectly with questions of authority and hierarchy throughout society, which are necessary for the political order to succeed. This is partly accomplished by extended references associated with the word crown (The word crown is used in both royal and non-royal contexts.). For this reason, both ideas will be discussed under this rubric.

First, it can be generally stated that the wise rule described in Proverbs is not merely a king per se. This is expressed in several notable statements:

> The crown of the wise is their wealth,
> but the folly of fools brings folly (Prov. 14:24).

> When a land transgresses, it has many rulers,
> but with a man of understanding and knowledge, its stability will long continue (Prov 28:2).

There are numerous references to the royal role of wisdom.

> Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king,
> and by steadfast love his throne is upheld (Prov. 20:28).

> In the light of a king's face there is life,
> and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain (Prov 16:15).

> The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will (Prov. 21:1).

> In a multitude of people is the glory of a king,
> but without people a prince is ruined (Prov. 14:28).

Although the book of Proverbs allows for a king, that role is not absolute. The king is not God, but instead must function within the expectations of the law and wisdom. As the texts below show, this tension in Old Testament thought goes back to 1 Samuel, and the warning

regarding human kings is echoed in 29:26. Ultimately, Yahweh is the foundation of the political order. Likewise, kings are to be righteous (16:12) and speak truthfully according to their station (17:7).

Complementary authority is also heavily emphasized in Proverbs. The king is no autocrat, and all societal levels and roles are expected to operate according to wisdom. Without trying to read some form of libertarian or democratic power distribution into the text, it can be said that everyone in society is to partake in the city's governance through wisdom. As can be seen in the first two examples below, such royal-wisdom authority is associated beyond the throne itself via the familiar metaphor of the "crown," here extending to the "excellent wife" and the elderly (12:4, 16:31). The final two examples relate to what might be considered the common classes of society. The term diligent in 12:24 can be applied to a wide swath of denizens, such as farmers and craftsmen. This verse can be broken down more generally using the Wisdom City hermeneutic via the paraphrase: *the sophisticated will rule, but the simple will not*. Finally, in 12:9, an interesting perspective is provided via antithetical parallelism, between being in a "lowly" station in life with something rather than pretending to be a great man and then lacking. In other words, there is nothing wrong with living at a common level if it is still according to wisdom.

> An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,
> but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones (Prov. 12:4).

> Gray hair is a crown of glory;
> it is gained in a righteous life (Prov. 16:31).

> The hand of the diligent will rule, while the slothful will be put to forced labor (Prov. 12:24).

> Better to be lowly and have a servant than to play the great man and lack bread (Prov. 12:9).

(6) The Faithful Assembly (5:14)

Aim: Another significant idea in Scripture and biblical political theology is that of the assembly. The idea appears not only in Proverbs but also in the book of Ecclesiastes, where the speaker (Qoheleth) is defined literally as a speaker before the assembly of Jerusalem. How this assembly was precisely configured is unknown. This aim, like the parallel idea in Ecclesiastes, is presented in the negative: "I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation" (Prov. 5:13-14).

The language of this section is heavily couched in themes of faithfulness or the dangers of following after Lady Foolishness. The implication is that the assembly stands as one of faithfulness, where allegiance to Lady Foolishness is met with "utter ruin" because of the foreign nature of such commitments. At least in the archetypal city of Proverbs 1-9, the assembly of the city leans towards faithfulness to wisdom. Notice the concept of ruin (see the study on city antonyms in the next chapter). The introduction of this idea reinforces the sliding scale between a simple vs. a sophisticated approach to wisdom. The simple are led to ruin, whereas the sophisticated can stand in the assembly of the city, which is faithful to wisdom.

Manifestation in 10-31: The assembly as a concept is mentioned throughout Scripture. In the book of Proverbs, the term assembly (קָהָל) is only mentioned three times directly. However, indirectly, it seems to appear throughout the book. This reading can especially be justified if one understands the concept of assembly broadly, possibly including elders, some combination or representative group of the city, wise counselors, or Israel in worship. The assembly, whatever it may have been, usefully represents and ties together some class or group of people involved with establishing and preserving the city, but most likely under the king's leadership.

The term in Proverbs (קָהָל) is described three times directly: once in a positive context (26:26), two in the negative (5:14, 21:16). In the examples below, the first describes one who hates and is dishonest. The pattern of his inner heart will be made known over time in the assembly so that it will be exposed. The second example (21:16) also references the assembly but uses a satirical or fictional "assembly of the dead." This phrase is intriguing and only occurs here in Proverbs. Whether this is meant as an allusion to Sheol or is a more literal warning of possible death which can come from foolishness, is not entirely clear. The statement's ambiguity usefully works towards various poetic applications or referents. The final verses mentioned, Proverbs 24:5-7, do not explicitly mention the assembly but hints at the importance of an "abundance of counselors," which may include the assembly or some sub-group. That the counselors are some form of a political body may be inferred by their connection with the gate in verse 7.

> Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips and harbors deceit in his heart; when he speaks graciously, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart; though his hatred be covered with deception, his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly (Prov. 26:24-26).

> One who wanders from the way of good sense will rest in the assembly of the dead (Prov. 21:16).

> A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might, or by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory. Wisdom is too high for a fool; in the gate he does not open his mouth (Prov. 24:5–7).

(7) The Exaltation of the Neighbor (the Wisdom Society) (6:3)

Aim: The 'other' in political discourse is an important concept. How one individual treats another is of paramount importance for any political body. The topic of justice has already been briefly introduced in this chapter, but now, in Proverbs chapter 6, the role of the "neighbor" is

brought to the forefront. For example, in a dispute, Solomon instructs, "...plead urgently with your neighbor" (Prov. 6:3, cf. Matt. 6:21-26).

Following in the Wisdom City image, the reader has progressed from the outside of the city to the inside via the gate and has been led about and upon the ways or roads of the city and now must consider the other inhabitants, their importance, and place in the city. Such an idea is not radical and simply extends the admonition of the Torah:

> You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord (Lev. 19:17-18).

Likewise, such sentiments are later echoed by Jesus's summation of the law in the New Testament: "Jesus replies, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt. 22:37-39). This section in Proverbs likewise uses synonyms for neighbor-related words like "witness" (6:19) and "brother" (6:19). The entire discourse extends into 6:20-35 where Solomon proceeds into a discussion of faithfulness about his "neighbor's wife" (6:29). Honoring the marriage of the neighbor is heavily emphasizes as a central aspect to biblical society.

Manifestation in 10-31: Within the image of the Wisdom City, the middle city is full not only of paths, ways, and crossroads but also of homes occupied by one's neighbors. The following aphorism exemplifies the exaltation of the neighbor in Proverbs:

> Better is a neighbor who is near
> than a brother who is far away (Prov. 27:10).

The neighbor is pictured as one who lives along the ways of the city but must contend with the tensions of the consequences of the "simple" vs. the "sophisticated" building on the literary manifestations of the "way" in Proverbs in the previous section (#3):

With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor,
but by knowledge the righteous are delivered (Prov. 11:9).

One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor,
but the way of the wicked leads them astray (Prov. 12:26).

A man of violence entices his neighbor
and leads him in a way that is not good (Prov. 16:29).

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

Finally, there is a corollary idea to that of neighbor: witness. Dealing with truth vs. falsity is vital for one's neighbors and the wisdom culture of the city. False witness is to be avoided.

Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit (Prov. 12:17).

A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies (Prov. 14:5).

(8) Allegiance to Wisdom (7:4)

Aim: In yet another TORAH-themed discourse, the son is encouraged to give his wholehearted allegiance to wisdom, "Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' and call insight your intimate friend, to keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words" (Prov. 7:4-5). Allegiance to ideas is important in any polity. Solomon places dedication to wisdom at the heart of the Wisdom City. Two houses come into play. The House of Solomon, wherefrom he spies out "the simple," specifically the "young man lacking sense," who is enticed by the prostitute and the prostitute's house. Without allegiance to wisdom, he is led to her house, which provides an innertextual echo of chapter 1, being the "way to sheol" (Prov 7:27).

Manifestation in 10-31: The literary aim of chapter 7 leads the reader to focus on having allegiance towards wisdom. Wisdom is to be held close, even like family might be. Chapters 10-31 echo this sentiment in significant ways. Regarding the Wisdom City, Proverbs 25:28 reminds us, through a negative example, of the importance of living in a sophisticated manner. Without such an approach, the city itself literary falls apart. Earlier in the book (10:14), the mouth of the fool, who does not "lay up knowledge" as the wise do, brings ruin near (the opposite state of city life).

A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls (Prov. 25:28).

The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near (Prov. 10:14).

More generally, Proverbs speaks of the importance of wisdom for avoiding destruction:

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

Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself,
but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded (Prov. 13:13).

A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain,
but knowledge is easy for a man of understanding (Prov. 14:6).

Leave the presence of a fool,
for there you do not meet words of knowledge (Prov. 14:7).

With such examples in mind, it might be tempting to think that the contrast between the simple and sophisticated or foolish and wise might be so far apart that the two cannot meet. In Proverbs 14:33, wisdom is not hidden. Instead, it is a public good. It is not a hostile corpus of knowledge but is intended for everyone:

Wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding,
but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools (Prov. 14:33).

(9) The Creation of the City as a Divine Echo of Creation (8:31)

Aim: Chapter 8 is famous for its emphasis on creation theology. Likewise, it is also pivotal for understanding the background image of the Wisdom City through its presentation of various gates. Thus, this chapter serves as an inclusio connecting the content of chapter one (particularly 1:20-22). What unique aim does it present? Daniel Estes provides an apt overview of this material, "When the high poetry of Proverbs 8:22–31 is reduced to prose, wisdom emerges as the divinely ordained order that permeates God's world."[130] Likewise, Dell states, "Underlying the more everyday themes are even deeper theological themes of God as creator and 'orderer' of the world, an order that, in the view of the sages, is reflected in human society."[131]

Manifestation in 10-31: Scripture reveals God to be the creator. He uniquely creates the world and everyone in it (Gen. 1-2). Hebrew reserves a word of creation particularly for this work, בָּרָא. Within this world, God has also created humanity in his image. As such, one of the chief characteristics of humankind is a creative impulse manifest in biology (bearing children) and the craftsmanship of the created world (secondary in comparison to God's creative acts). Man can re-form creation, but he cannot create ex-nihilo. There is quite a range of creative output from music, language, writing, and building. One of the most important aims, perhaps the focal point of such non-personal creation, is the city (thus, the city is the telos of material creation).

In Proverbs, the work of wisdom, as an extension of God's creative being, is exhibited and celebrated in the poetry section. Wisdom also becomes a bridge for applying creative motifs

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[130] Daniel J. Estes, *Hear, My Son: Teaching and Learning in Proverbs 1–9*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 4, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 1997), 24.

[131] Katherine Dell, "The Laughter of Fools: The Relevance of Wisdom in Today's World," *Religions*, No. 7/110 (2016): 9.

to the city's life. How is the nature and establishment of wisdom in the city manifest in chapters

10-31 as a reflection of these initial claims? First is an acknowledgment of the fundamental

notion of life. In 12:28, a strong contrast is made between life and death. This reflects God's

creative intent in creation. Humankind was not meant to destroy but to build positively using the

tools of matter, form, and energy.

> In the path of righteousness is life,
> and in its pathway there is no death (Prov. 12:28)

> A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Like a gold ring or an
> ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear. Like the cold of snow in the time of
> harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the soul of his
> masters. Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not
> give (Prov. 25:11–14).

> Closely associated with these concepts is the exaltation of work. In Genesis, work

broadly understood as a creational vocation was introduced. Likewise, man's fall into sin set him

at odds with his vocation. In Proverbs, work is associated with a characteristic of sophisticated

living. It is described both positively and negatively.

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

> The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food,
> but it is swept away through injustice (Prov. 13:23).

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

> The concept of fruit is also essential as a metaphor for the various outputs or qualities of

output produced by people. Notice that fruit also depends on circumstance and divine provision,

making it a complex and 'fruitful' literary device.

> Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit,
> and he who guards his master will be honored (Prov 27:18).

> Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread,

but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty (Prov. 28:19).

(10) Building the Heights, or the Prominence, of the City (9:1)

<u>Aim</u>: The beginning of chapter 9 begins dramatically with the statement, "Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars" (Prov. 9:1). In chapter 2, the significance of this chapter was discussed in more detail, but it is worth recalling that this section stands as a zenith not only of the prologue (chapters 1-9) but also of the Wisdom City image itself. In chapter 9, wisdom is fully established in the city's heights. The opening line reminds the reader of the exact mechanism regarding this establishment: building (בָּנָה). Thus, one of the aims of the prologue is to provide a positive biblical theology around the idea of the physical building or craftsmanship of the city, environs, and objects within.

The concept of wisdom, explored in Chapter 1, is a dual word indicating the internal understanding of life and the external application of creational knowledge through skilled craftsmanship. Proverbs chapter 8 celebrates some of these various themes related to wisdom's role in the larger creation (itself a personification of the work of God). In chapter 9, the craftsmanship of wisdom makes a house and an entire establishment befitting the heights of the city. In her home is a feast, complete with a set table and the finest foods.

By contrast, the foolish woman does not build her house but borrows. Although she lives in the heights, by comparison to wisdom, she seems to be merely squatting or occupying her house, extending a much lesser invitation. Her food is stolen, eaten in private (vs. the public celebration of wisdom's banquet), and ultimately is simply a facade of Sheol itself. Within this admission, the reader has come full circle. Although this house is in the heights, Sheol's reappearance reminds the reader that Sheol's agenda is present in the city and must be resisted, especially in the heights. This resistance comes in the form of a question: what type of city will

this be? A city of wisdom or a city of foolishness? Or, by extension, the question is posed: what type of city will the reader build?

Manifestation in 10-31: The final literary aim and manifestation involves building in the heights, imitating the establishment of wisdom in the city (9:1). Three central ideas are present.

Building in general:

> By wisdom, a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches (Prov. 24:3–4).

> The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down (Prov. 14:1).

Building into prominence:

> The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath (Prov. 15:24).

> A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination (Prov. 18:11).

> Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men (Prov. 22:29).

> In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but trouble befalls the income of the wicked (Prov. 15:6).

> The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway (Prov. 15:19).

Building upon the Monotheistic confession of Israel:

> The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe (Prov. 18:10).

> The Lord tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow's boundaries (Prov. 15:25)

Summary

As demonstrated, the book of Proverbs offers instruction (pedagogy) through the foundation of various political ideals in chapters 1-9. In relation to the city background, such

content shows the reader how to approach and understand the manifestation of aphoristic material in chapters 10-31. As the next chapter will show, such a pedagogy not only involves gaining insight within the book but also becomes foundational for reading the wisdom genre politically across Scripture. Such a pedagogy reinforces the importance of wisdom and city themes, showcasing God's instruction towards making the people of Israel into a wisdom civilization.

CHAPTER 4: WISDOM CITY HERMENEUTIC

The External Pedagogy of the Text

The external pedagogy of the book of Proverbs can now be introduced, building on the material from the previous chapter. This second form of pedagogy entails examining the relationship between the book's claims and the rest of the canon of Scripture. Thus, it can be said that the book of Proverbs teaches the reader how to approach the wisdom genre politically throughout Scripture by providing a Wisdom City hermeneutic. This chapter will present such a hermeneutic through the following sections: (1) a basic lexical and textual survey of wisdom and city words, (2) a set of summary proposals for reading Wisdom City concepts throughout Scripture, and finally, (3) a Wisdom City hermeneutic template and framework to assist the reader in the identification and interpretation of related texts.

Defining The Wisdom Genre Scripturally

It is necessary to examine where wisdom is located in the context of the primary source of Scripture to answer the previously introduced question from Job regarding the seat of wisdom. Since the question of wisdom has been paired with the political concept for this study, the words *wisdom* and *city* will be examined separately. Also, for this paper, a survey of wisdom and the city concepts will be limited to the canonical context.[132] This survey excludes other ancient Near Eastern texts' apocryphal works and wisdom content. The goal is to develop a map showing wisdom words, concepts, and relationships.

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[132] That is, the 66 books of the Protestant/Reformation canon.

Basic Lexical Survey: Wisdom and City Words

As Osborne explains, "Meaning is at the heart of communication. Words provide the building blocks of meaning, grammar, and syntax the design."[133] The idea that words are building blocks is appropriate for this dissertation section. An exposition of such foundational elements will be broken down by several sub-surveys as follows: (1) a study of basic wisdom words across Scripture, (2) a study of wisdom antonyms, (3) a study of basic city words across Scripture, and finally (4) a study of city antonyms.

A Survey of Basic Wisdom Words Across Scripture

The first significant survey involves the most common, well-known, and established words relating to wisdom in scholarship: (1) words built on the triliteral root of חכם covering the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, and (2) the words built on the σοφ- stem for the Greek New Testament.[134]

Matityahu Clark attributes the core idea of the root of חכם to the verbal notion to 'accumulate knowledge.'[135] Although this is a good starting point for understanding the concept, the actual range of meaning of the word in the Old Testament suggests a more complex foundation. According to Andrew Steinmann, "It must be borne in mind that חָכְמָה is not completely equivalent to the English word 'wisdom.' חָכְמָה is knowledge and the ability to apply

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[133] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Rev. and expanded,* 82.

[134] The use of σοφ- words as a significant New Testament concept is justified by the substantial use in the New Testament text itself and its parallel use via the Septuagint which renders חכם related words as in the example from Proverbs 1:20: "Σοφία ἐν ἐξόδοις ὑμνεῖται, ἐν δὲ πλατείαις παρρησίαν ἄγει" from Logos digital edition: *Septuaginta*: *With Morphology, electronic ed*. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), Prov. 1:20.

[135] Matityahu Clark and Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew: Based on the Commentaries of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch* (Jerusalem; New York, NY: Feldheim Pub., 1999), 80.

what one knows. In some passages in the Old Testament, it denotes craftsmanship and proficiency in an occupation (e.g., Ex 35:31)."[136] Annette Potgieter describes wisdom, stating, "It can be described as how a person organizes his or her life for it to lead to a good end."[137] The duality between knowing and building is essential to the concept of חכם, regardless of grammatical form.[138] The Hebrew root manifests in three parts of speech: the verb, noun, and adjective forms. The verb חָכַם is present 26 times. The noun form, חָכְמָה, is present 149 times. Finally, the adjectival form חָכָם is present 153 times.[139] In the New Testament, the word is represented by those associated with the σοφ- stem. Similar to its Old Testament parallel, the σοφ- words appear in a verb, noun, and adjective form. The verb (σοφίζω) is present twice, the noun (σοφία) 49 times, and the adjective: σοφός, 19. The Hebrew and Greek terms represent the total uses of the familiar concept of wisdom across Scripture, and their respective grammatical forms represent approximately 379 instances of the idea. As shown in Figure 8, the frequency of wisdom words has been plotted on a map of the books of both the Old and New Testaments, showing a distinct usage pattern. According to these basic terms, the use of wisdom predominates in the Old Testament. Likewise, within this first half of the Canon, the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes predictably stand out for their share of references. In the New Testament, perhaps surprisingly, the book of 1 Corinthians stands out as a significant literary receptacle of the concept.

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[136] Andrew E. Steinmann, *Proverbs, Concordia Commentary* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 25.

[137] Annette Potgieter, "Psalm 26 and Proverbs: Tracing Wisdom Themes," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Art #818 (May 2014): 1.

[138] Köstenberger and Patterson add, "Of central importance is the notion of the skill and expertise born of virtue to apply godly wisdom properly. This is expressed in both the Hebrew hokmâ and Greek sophia (wisdom)." See Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 240.

[139] Word counts based on estimates from BibleWorks and Logos Bible software.

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
3	26	0	0	8

Joshua	Judges	1 Samuel	2 Samuel	1 Kings	2 Kings
0	1	0	6	18	0

Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel
12	16	8

Hosea	Joel	Amos	Ob.	Jonah	Micah	Nahum	Hab.	Zeph.	Haggai	Zech.	Mal.
2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Psalms	Job	Proverbs
12	28	97

Ruth	Song	Ecclesiastes	Lamentations	Esther
0	0	49	0	2

Daniel	Ezra	Nehemiah	1 Chronicles	2 Chronicles
3	0	0	2	13

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Acts
5	1	7	0	4

Rom	1 Co	2 Co	Gal	Eph	Phil	Col	1 Th	2 Th	1 Tim	2 Tim	Titus	Ph
5	25	1	0	4	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	0

Heb	James	1 Pt	2 Pt	1 J	2J	3J	Jude	Revelation
0	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	4

Figure 8: Total Instances of Wisdom (hkm or soph-) words distributed across the Bible.

A Survey of Wisdom Word Antonyms

Various wisdom words have been presented but tell only half of the story. The book of Proverbs, along with the remaining books of Scripture, spends significant time categorizing people and stances opposite wisdom. Perhaps the most common appellation in this respect is the *fool*. Fools and foolishness take on many variations in the book. Steinman provides an excellent list of the subtleties of the roles of the anti-wise: (1) the gullible person, (2) the fool, (3) the stubborn fool, (4) the complete fool, (5) those who lack sense, (6) the stupid, (7) the arrogant, (8) the lazy, and (9) the mocker.[140] He correlates these types with related ethical failures such as foolishness, gullibility, or stupidity.

One especially contrarian role to the wise is that of the 'simple' or פֶּתִי in Hebrew. Koptak describes him as follows: "In Proverbs 1:4, we meet, for the first time, the person to receive this instruction in wisdom. That person is 'simple' or 'untutored' (peti; some translations even use 'ignorant') …."[141] Although the word only occurs 18 times in the Old Testament (mostly in Proverbs), its significance is essential for the prologue of Proverbs where the פֶּתִי are brought center stage through the invitation of wisdom in 1:22a, "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?" Steinmann adds an important theological caveat to the category of fools when he states, "In Proverbs, fools are said to be able to think and reason, often with much sophistication. It is not lack of intelligence but lack of faith and trust in God that ultimately classifies one as a fool."[142]

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[140] Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 30–32.

[141] Koptak, *Proverbs, The NIV Application Commentary*, 59–60.

[142] Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 30.

A Survey of City Words

"The Hebrew Bible is a 'Book of Cities,'" as Carla Sulzbah argues.[143] Based on the survey of the present section, this truism can also be applied to the New Testament, for the concept of the city is ubiquitous textually across the Bible. Very few books are silent regarding this term, and many have substantial rates of occurrence that must be adequately categorized.

The main word for city in the Hebrew Old Testament is עִיר. Several other words also stand in for the city, including קִרְיָה (Proverbs 29:8) and קֶרֶת (Proverbs 8:3). Due to their close association, these two variations will be included in the total count. Carl Schultz explains that "ʿîr refers to a permanent settlement without reference to size or claims."[144] He goes on to explain that:

> Not only is there a difference between the modern and ancient city, there were differences between the ancient cities themselves, making definition even more difficult. The primary distinction between a city and a village (ḥāṣēr and bānôt—the latter literally "daughters") is that the former ʿîr generally had a wall. Frequent reference to the "gate" of the city where governmental functions were held, underscores the walled nature of cities.[145]

On the other hand, the words including קֶרֶת and קִרְיָה, according to Mulder, "…two Hebrew words for 'city' that also occur frequently in toponyms, are closely associated with → קִיר qîr, because they are derived from a biconsonantal base qar."[146] The cognate word קִיר, which means wall, should also be noted for its probable association with עִיר as a walled city. עִיר is the

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[143] Carla Sulzbach, "City Parody as a Literary Trope in the Biblical Text," in *The City in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. James K. Aitken and Hilary F. Marlow (London; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2016), 147.

[144] Carl Schultz, "1615 עִיר," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 664.

[145] Ibid.

[146] M. J. Mulder, "קרח and קִרְיָה," ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 164.

most common word for the city with a count of 944, followed by קִרְיָה at 29 instances, and קֶרֶת occurring only five times[147] in the entirety of the Old Testament.[148] The name Zion is also a vital city descriptor (representing historical and archetypal senses). It mostly appears in the books of Psalms and Isaiah and will be further examined in a later chapter.

In the New Testament, the single most common word for city is πόλις, occurring some 153 times. The word will be familiar to many readers as it forms the basis of the English terms polity and political.

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[147] Job 29:7, Prov. 8:3, 9:3, 9:14, and 11:11.

[148] Word counts based on Bibleworks and Logos Bible software.

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
43	3	12	36	53

Joshua	Judges	1 Samuel	2 Samuel	1 Kings	2 Kings
129	50	32	43	49	52

Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel
53	119	54

Hosea	Joel	Amos	Ob.	Jonah	Micah	Nahum	Hab.	Zeph.	Haggai	Zech.	Mal.
5	1	8	1	6	5	1	4	4	0	8	0

Psalms	Job	Proverbs
20	5	13

Ruth	Song	Ecclesiastes	Lamentations	Esther
4	3	5	7	11

Daniel	Ezra	Nehemiah	1 Chronicles	2 Chronicles
6	4	18	37	74

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Acts
25	8	36	8	41

Rom	1 Co	2 Co	Gal	Eph	Phil	Col	1 Th	2 Th	1 Tim	2 Tim	Titus	Ph
1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Heb	James	1 Pt	2 Pt	1 J	2J	3J	Jude	Revelation
4	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	24

Figure 9: Common City Word Totals Across Scripture

A Survey of City Word Antonyms

Any consideration of city and urban-related words can be extended by examining the opposite or contrasting idea. Such notions help to define better what a city is or is not. Likewise, non-city words provide an essential foundation for reading related texts. In the aggregate, they provide a biblical theology of negatives across Scripture.

Perhaps the most famous word standing in contrast to the city is that of the wilderness: מִדְבָּר. With 257 occurrences, it manifests several different readings, depending on the context, as summarized from BDB: (1) as pastureland, (2) arid land, or (3) a region that may have habitation or dwellings.[149] Interestingly, it only occurs once in the book of Proverbs (21:19) in the humorous adage regarding a quarrelsome wife (cf. 19:13, 21:9, 27:15). Talmon provides a valuable summary of this wide-ranging and ominous concept:

> The term miḏbār refers to arid or semiarid regions whose scarcity of water makes them unsuitable for agriculture and farming settlements. This desolate area is yet in the primeval state of chaos (Dt. 32:10) or was reduced again to such chaos as divine punishment for human transgressions (Isa. 64:9[10]; Jer. 22:6; Hos. 2:5[3]; Zeph. 2:13; Mal. 1:3). It evokes fear and revulsion.[150]

The New Testament equivalent is ἔρημος, which BDAG describes as an isolated, abandoned, desolate, or deserted, uninhabited region, desert, grassland, or wilderness.[151] It is predominantly found in the Gospel narratives occurring 48 times.

Similar to the wilderness is the Arabah (עֲרָבָה), which has similar qualities to the concept of wilderness, with a lesser range of specificity. Arabah occurs 64 times in the Old Testament.

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[149] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 184.

[150] Shemaryahu Talmon, "מִדְבָּר," ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 91.

[151] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 391.

BDB describes it in either the general sense of a "desert-plain, steppe" or the more particular

"arid steppe W. of Dead Sea."[152] In many cases, its use is synonymous with miḏbār, as in Isaiah

35:1 (ESV):

> The wilderness(miḏbār) and the dry land shall be glad;
> the desert(ʿrāḇâ) shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;

שְׁמָמָה, a negative superlative of the group of words in this section, seems to be translated

as either a ruin (to be in a state of ruin) or as a desolation. It is generally considered an evocative

term describing significant destruction. BDB offers the translation, "devastation, waste," with the

further exposition added: "usually of land, city, houses, etc."[153] It occurs 53 times in the Old

Testament in the noun form. The verbal stem is also of common use. Meyer helpfully observes,

"The occurrences of the root are distributed throughout almost the entire Hebrew Bible

(exceptions: Judges, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Haggai, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs,

Esther, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles)."[154]

One possible synonym of שְׁמָמָה from the New Testament is ἀφανισμός, meaning "the

condition of being no longer visible, [freq.] in the transferred sense *destruction*."[155] One instance

exists in the New Testament in Hebrews 8:13, "In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first

one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away

(ἀφανισμοῦ)" (Heb. 8:13).

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[152] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 787.

[153] Ibid., 1031.

[154] I. Meyer, "שָׁמַם," ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 239.

[155] Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 155.

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
7	26	6	53	27

Joshua	Judges	1 Samuel	2 Samuel	1 Kings	2 Kings
27	0	16	10	4	4

Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel
32	45	35

Hosea	Joel	Amos	Ob.	Jonah	Micah	Nahum	Hab.	Zeph.	Haggai	Zech.	Mal.
5	8	3	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	1	2

Psalms	Job	Proverbs
20	6	2

Ruth	Song	Ecclesiastes	Lamentations	Esther
0	3	5	3	0

Daniel	Ezra	Nehemiah	1 Chronicles	2 Chronicles
0	0	2	4	7

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Acts
8	9	10	5	9

Rom	1 Co	2 Co	Gal	Eph	Phil	Col	1 Th	2 Th	1 Tim	2 Tim	Titus	Ph
0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Heb	James	1 Pt	2 Pt	1 J	2J	3J	Jude	Revelation
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

Figure 10: Distribution of Common City Antonyms

Textual Survey

Having considered the building blocks of words and their fundamental relationships, this section will now sift through this data to present significant clusters of usage that will be foundational and instrumental in expositing wisdom as a political genre for the remainder of this paper. Several patterns will be examined: (1) wisdom and The Tabernacle, (2) the wisdom commission, and (3) the wisdom refrain.

Wisdom and the Tabernacle (Exod. 28 & 35)

Although wisdom is mentioned previously in the Torah (significantly in Gen. Ch 41), one of the first significant and important references to wisdom comes from the book of Exodus. In two crucial sections, wisdom (חָכְמָה) is revealed to be more than mere knowledge. Both pericopes cover material related to the building of the Tabernacle. First, Exodus 28 describes the ornamentation of humankind in priestly service to God:

> And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. You shall speak to all the skillful (חָכְמָה), whom I have filled with a spirit of skill (חָכְמָה), that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood (28:2-3).

The second section, coming from 31:1-5 reflects the idea of building human objects and buildings, particularly with a religious value:

> The LORD said to Moses, "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability (חָכְמָה) and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft."

What is common to both of these sections is that they demonstrate the duality of the concept of wisdom, as previously mentioned in the semantic survey. They also provide fertile ground for considering the intersection of wisdom ideas and a theological center of civilization. More will be covered on this topic in a later chapter.

The Wisdom Commission (Deut. 4:5-8)

In the first speech of Moses to the people of Israel, he reminds them of how connected their lives have become with the "Lord your God" (4:4). Recalling the conflict between Yahweh and the Baal of Peor, Moses seeks to inspire the people by reminding them of the goodness of the law and its potential impact on the people.[156] Moses says (emphasis added):

> See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, **for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'** For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

For this paper, Deuteronomy 4:5-8 as quoted above can be described as Israel's *wisdom commission.* Through Moses' charge to the people, Israel was to live according to God's ways and in faith before him, establishing a wisdom civilization that would serve as a clear example to those in Israel and outsiders. Such a commission uses חָכְמָה and other wisdom words to delineate the intended inner civilizational identity and structure. The essential monotheism of the law, becoming manifest politically, is expressed in visible and tangible wisdom. Wisdom, as described by חָכְמָה, does not simply indicate knowledge but also skill or craftsmanship as provided as a gift in creation.

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[156] The monotheism of this section is important for its relation to wisdom and civilization and will be explored more in detail in later chapters.

The Wisdom Refrain[157]

Raymond Van Leeuwen aptly examines one particular wisdom cluster of significance. In his insightful essay entitled *Building God's House*, Van Leeuwen examines the concept of *house* presented in the book of Proverbs. His analysis of Proverbs 3:19-20 in particular is appropriate:

> Like a house or a city, the cosmos must have its foundation "laid" (the verb yāsaḏ is regularly used of buildings), and it must be "made firm" or solid (kûn is also a building term). Significantly, this 'cosmic house' is built with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge (hoḵmâ, tĕḇûnâ, and daʿaṯ), words that English readers do not usually associate with skillful building.[158]

This cosmic house, as he describes it, is built using the triadic formula of wisdom-understanding-knowledge. This patterning is essential because it comes up in multiple places throughout Scripture, including Exodus 31:1-3, Exodus 35:30-31, 1 Kings 7:14, Proverbs 3:19-20 and 24:3-4. It will be referred to throughout this dissertation as the *wisdom refrain* to distinguish the importance of this threefold reference.

Opportunity for Reappraisal of the Wisdom Genre: A Proposal

Having presented the thesis of this paper with a survey of historical trends in wisdom scholarship and a survey of wisdom components throughout Scripture (chapter 1), the remainder of this chapter will propose a new hermeneutic for reading the wisdom genre and literature in Scripture. The data shown in the previous section(s) not only shows where many wisdom words and themes are located but also provides a map of the concept to aid in exposition.

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[157] This section reflects material this author explored for a paper on Wisdom in the class OBST-860 Writings, at Liberty University.

[158] Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Building God's House: An Exploration in Wisdom," in *The Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke*, ed. J. I. Packer and Sven K. Soderlund (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 205.'

But where does such a map lead? Not all locations on a map (or in the city it represents) are equally important. N. T. Wright, in his survey of Pauline Scholarship, uses a map analogy to sketch out themes and trends in the study of Paul's letters. Likewise, this chapter has outlined the question and the contours of the discussion to help provide a foundation, or as Wright states, "Such a map exists mainly to help people see where the main lines go, and also to avoid making wrong connections."[159] It should also be added that the map proposed here is distinct in that it does not include the terrain of various external philosophies. Rather, it is focused on the canonical text exclusively.

A new proposal around the genre of wisdom is akin to a suggested list of significant places on the map or a well-curated itinerary that guides the journey. Developing a proposal of genre is no small task, and what is offered here is only the barest outline. A hermeneutic proposal covering all of the essential facets of this question can be represented in six sub-proposals:

> (1) Wisdom, as Word or Concept, is present in Scripture
> (2) Wisdom is Presented as a Significant *Concept*
> (3) Wisdom is a Significant *Thread*
> (4) The Concept of the *City* is Present and Significant in Scripture
> (5) The Concept of the City is Represented by a Historical Type and
>   an Archetypal Version (as Exemplified in Proverbs and elsewhere)
> (6) Proverbs Stands at the Center of Wisdom Discourse in the Bible, whether by Word
>   Frequency, Textual Significance, or its Contribution to the Definition of the Wisdom
>   Genre. *Likewise, it Artfully Connects the Concepts of Wisdom and City*.

(1) Wisdom Words and associated Ideas are Present in Scripture.

As shown in the semantic survey, wisdom words are present throughout Scripture. Although such a statement may seem obvious, it must be made to establish a foundation for the

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[159] N. T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), xiv.

present study. The major wisdom words occur almost 400 times throughout Scripture. The significance of this fact is that wisdom should not be dismissed as an important part of this enterprise known as biblical exposition. Wisdom is not an accidental, unimportant, or fanciful part of Scripture. Rather, the witness of the text shows that wisdom words are present and provide the significant foundation for the definition, relationships, and structure of what makes the wisdom genre, or to summarize: words make genre. One of the most obvious implications of this fact is that wisdom is certainly not a dead idea but is very much present in the text. The challenge of the presence of such words means that if transitory concepts of genre have failed, the reader must *begin again*, attempting to see what the words themselves want us to understand. Although Chou speaks more broadly of the interpretive task, his challenge regarding hermeneutics is appropriate at the semantic level, "The way they read is the way they wrote and the way we should read them. By this, their hermeneutic is our hermeneutic."[160]

(2) Wisdom is Presented as a Significant Concept.

Studying the words of Scripture is essential, but not every word bears the same meaning, usefulness, or significance. For example, the Hebrew article is present in some 13,000+ verses throughout the Old Testament[161] and, although undoubtedly necessary, does not carry the same range of meaning as other words. On the face of it, the definite article may seem more significant due to the volume of its presence throughout the text, but this is not the case. Instead, a word can still be of great significance with fewer instances.

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[160] Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles*, 22.

[161] Statistics from BibleWorks.

This is certainly true of wisdom, with its approximately 400 significant references. Although it is not present in such a large volume as the inestimable definite article, where and how it appears is of considerable interest and impact on the reader's mind. As was previously mentioned, wisdom appears at key turns in the story of God, creation, Israel, the Gospel, Jesus, and the Church.

The appearance of wisdom as a concept occurs throughout Scripture. The momentousness of the word is demonstrated through multiple examples. In the Torah, for instance, wisdom is demonstrated via the craftsmanship of the tabernacle builders (Exod. 40), which is a characteristic of those who follow the law (Deut. 4:6), and even describes Joshua's anointing before the Lord, as the reader is informed: "And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom" (Deut. 34:9). Wisdom often is understood as a divine gift (2 Sam 14:20; 1 Kings 3:28). Solomon's wisdom is particularly significant, as the reader is informed, "that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt" (1 Ki 4:30). It is understood as a divine attribute or possession (Job 12:13) and something to be deeply sought after (Job 28:20). The "spirit of wisdom" is promised for the future messiah (Isaiah 11:2) and given to various prophets (Dan. 1:17). In the New Testament, Jesus is identified as one who possess wisdom (Matt. 13:54, Mark 6:2) and was a component of his teaching (Matt. 8) and described by Paul as one, "who became to us wisdom from God" (1 Cor. 1:30).

(3) Wisdom is Presented as a Significant Thread.

Wisdom words are present and significant, but together, they also form a significant thread. This third argument for a new approach to the wisdom genre is recognizing that wisdom clusters form together into a narrative. The way this happens is complex and will be examined

throughout the remainder of the paper. Still, such a proposal challenges the reductionistic readings of wisdom found both at academic and popular levels.

As previously acknowledged, wisdom can be considered a technical and significant concept when it appears. Such instances must be regarded beyond their individual use cases. Together, they form a significant thread that spans the entirety of the canon from Genesis to Revelation. Again, on some level, this may be obvious. However, this approach may be deficient in the historical-critical and postmodern camps; thus, this point must be emphasized. The thread of wisdom is one of the arguments that mitigates against an atomistic reading of Scripture.

In the case of wisdom, although it is seemingly secondary to the narrative of sin and salvation, it nonetheless provides an essential background throughout the text. It stands firmly in the category of creation theology. These creational themes intersect with others, providing a rich theological and historical tapestry. The thread or the story of wisdom as a peculiar characteristic and gift of God that humankind joyfully receives to interact successfully with the world should not be discounted.

(4) The Concept of the City and Civilization is Present and Significant in Scripture

Along with wisdom, the word *city* is likewise critical in the scriptural narrative. Cities form a key backdrop to many of the problems and resolutions encountered by the reader of Scripture. Cities almost become characters in their own right. For example, the Tower of Babel and its associated city manifest the political rebellion of humanity against God. Likewise, David captured the city of the Jebusites, making it his capital, Jerusalem.

Reading cities and city structures throughout Scripture also involves reading in the aggregate, considering various people's civilizational characteristics and purposes. Civilizations comprise cities, villages, towns, houses, families, and cultural output. Israel is the primary

example in Scripture that emphasizes allegiance to Yahweh and his wisdom culture. Other civilizations are also considered competitors to Israel, especially involving theological claims.

(5) The Concept of the City is Represented by a Historical type (Jerusalem) and an Archetypal Version (as Exemplified in Proverbs and Elsewhere).

It can be said that cities are essential not only in the text but also in their function, which must be differentiated based on the literary intent of each pericope, building on the recognition of the previous proposal. Such a distinction comes down to two major categories: (1) the historical and (2) the archetypal. The archetypal is rooted in the historical, for the story of Scripture is firstly and primarily a historical account of humanity, Israel, Jesus, and the Church. Within the literature surrounding this history, cities become symbols and devices that play many roles in the complex poetics of various sections of Scripture, especially the wisdom books.

(6) Proverbs Stands at the Center of Wisdom Discourse in the Bible

At the heart of this proposal is the book of Proverbs. As shown in the wisdom word survey, Proverbs takes center stage in the panoply of related books in Scripture relating to wisdom, although it does not possess a monopoly. Many have recognized the book's prominence, as Köstenberger and Patterson have observed, "When we think of wisdom literature, our minds are immediately drawn to the book of Proverbs."[162] The idea captured in this quote, along with popular views on wisdom, complements the conclusions of the brief word survey. The survey shows quantitatively and qualitatively what most readers know intuitively. By way of a map analogy, Proverbs acts as a central attraction and landmark by which all visitors recognize and

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[162] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 241.

orient themselves. This point is more important than mere trivia. Proverbs-as-center is at the heart of the thesis of this work and is confirmed as such by the data.

Tools of the Wisdom City Hermeneutic

This chapter has examined the idea of external pedagogy. How does Proverbs teach the reader how to understand the political nature of wisdom across the text better? With some of the introductory and survey data considered, this final section of the chapter will provide several tools or approaches by which wisdom can be sought out and better understood throughout Scripture. This section will outline and explain the tools of the external pedagogy of Proverbs through two major sub-topics: (1) generic templates and (2) an introduction of the Wisdom City hermeneutical chiasm.

Wisdom City Generic Templates

It has been said that genres act as a contract, providing clues to the reader on how they should interpret any text. Such clues involve signals presented by patterns in the text, which become identified as genres through repetition. Two major categories of templates can now be introduced: (1) the theological and (2) the textual.

The theological template revolves around the presence of God as the center of any given wisdom scenario. God's presence manifests throughout Scripture in significant ways. From the Garden of Eden to the center of the Wisdom City to the presence of God with his people in the temple, God's presence at the center is important and must be noted. The specific form of the template may take on the following pattern:

    a The outside
            b The inside
                    c The presence of God
            b' The inside
    a' The outside

This template appears in the form of a chiasm. Directionality plays an important role in this model. As one nears the center, one comes into (or is invited into) the presence of God, a wisdom transformation occurs. Likewise, being departed (or being expelled) away from God involves a devolution of one's standing before God and increases the sense of foolishness (simplicity). It should be noted that such a pattern is not unique to wisdom, but it is important to highlight here because the Wisdom City, with its theological center focused on Yahweh, participates in the typology of God's presence throughout Scripture, through both the pre-figuring of various scenarios and the escalation of this template after the appearance of the Wisdom City in Proverbs. Clues to this generic type follow important direction words such as: out, outside, in, inside, etc.

The second major category, the textual template, focuses on the previously introduced wisdom transformation formula introduced in the exposition of Proverbs 1:20-22, namely the simple-to-sophisticated trope. This is the base template to match any literary unit the reader suspects may be influenced by or read through a Wisdom City understanding.[163]

> Type #1 – Simple to Sophisticated
> I. Simple
>   II. Transformation
> III. Sophistication

> Type #2 – Sophisticated to Simple (reversal pattern)
> I. Sophistication
>   II. Transformation
> III. Simple

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[163] The approach of generic templating was inspired by the work of Gary Smith, In his work Smith summarized multiple generic examples from the prophetic literature such as judgement speech, covenant lawsuit, trial speech, disputation, salvation oracle, etc.) see Gary V. Smith, *Interpreting the Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook*, ed. David M. Howard Jr., *Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2014), 29.

Building on these templates, the examples below show a very common semantic and thematic

Wisdom City idea:

<u>Example #1 -- wilderness to city</u>
I. Wilderness (Simple)
         II. Transformation
III. City (Sophistication)

<u>Example #2 – city to wilderness (reversal pattern)</u>
I. City (sophisticated)
         II. Transformation
III. Wilderness (simple)

The application of this template can take on many forms throughout Scripture and will be

examined and expanded upon in later chapters.

The Wisdom City Hermeneutical Chiasm

The specific proposal here is twofold. One, Proverbs contains an inner hermeneutic. As

was explored in detail in Chapter 2, the central two-fold division of the book lends itself to a

particular relationship and performative output. As chapters 1-9 and 10-31 work together, they

produce a transformative influence upon the reader, which points to an intended result. This

inner hermeneutic is essential, and it becomes more so with the new proposal for the wisdom

genre. At the heart of this proposal, the book of Proverbs stands as a definitional center of

wisdom in the canon of Scripture. It is not to be understood as merely one wisdom work among

equals nor a quirky appendix of aphorisms. Instead, it must be considered the center of an

interpretive chiasm (see Figure 11), giving meaning and interpretive clarity to the threads of

wisdom in the books surrounding it.

Along with the book of Proverbs, a brief mention must be made of the *minor wisdom*

books, a unique title to this paper. They include, in the following order: Ruth, Song of Solomon,

Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations. As shown in the next chapter's survey, they all contain

significant wisdom and city themes that demonstrate a unique argument. They are like smaller mountain peaks in a landscape, surrounding the leading and largest peak of the book of Proverbs. Or they can be considered as moons orbiting a planet. Likewise, returning to the map analogy, they can be regarded as complementary but secondary landmarks around the main attraction. This complementary sense is recognized because these works extend the thought of Proverbs textually, canonically, and conceptually. They do this through the rhythm of continuity and discontinuity of various concepts and metaphors.

The four books were chosen due to their unique idea set and their traditional association with the wisdom tradition in Scripture. This does not precisely correspond with other wisdom associations like those of Esther, Job, etc. This group only partially overlaps with the Megilloth.

So then, Proverbs, along with the minor wisdom books, stand at the proposed center of a canonical interpretive chiasm. If such works define wisdom most clearly and brightly, how can one look at the remainder of Scripture through such a perspective? Such a hermeneutical move divides into several areas of focus.

The first involves going backward to a time before Proverbs. At first glance, this may seem counter-intuitive, but, as a later chapter will argue in detail, the city-focused imagery of Proverbs and its consequent refreshing of the wisdom genre will help wisdom words and themes become better understood in the Torah and Historical Prophets. Wisdom does not begin in Proverbs but in Genesis. The seed planted in Genesis becomes the full intended tree in the book of Proverbs, providing a vantage point and maturity to understand the concept. The second perspective moves forward from Proverbs[164] to the remainder of Scripture. This includes the

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[164] Proverbs, like the book of Romans, presents itself as having a "constitutional" character regarding its subject.

remainder of the Former Prophets, the classical Prophets, the Writings, and ultimately the entire

New Testament. Chapters 6 and 7 of this work will survey wisdom in these sections.
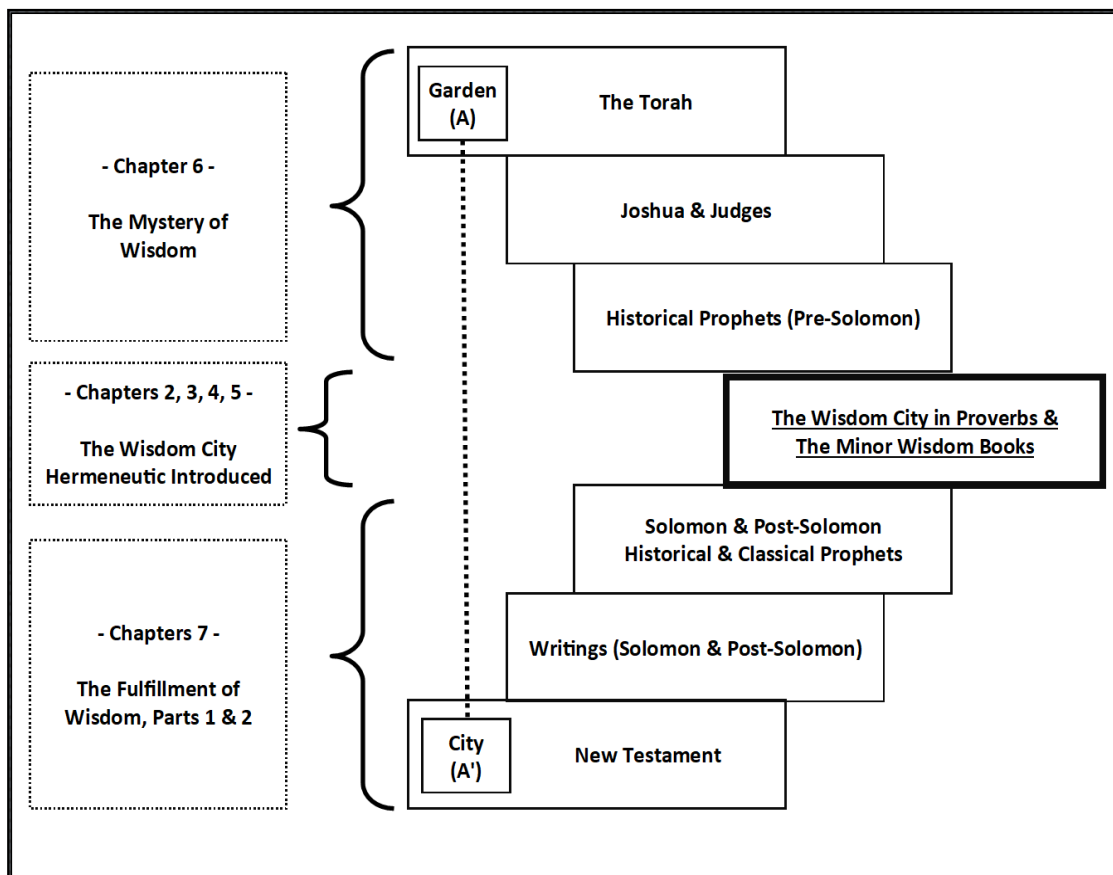

Figure 11: The Wisdom City Hermeneutical Chiasm

Conclusion

The book of Proverbs provides the reader with a particular two-part strategy through the

differing textual aims of chapters 1-9 and 10-31 (as introduced in chapter 3). The present

chapter, by contrast, shows how the book of Proverbs in its entirety contributes to a hermeneutic

that equips the reader of Scripture to better understand related political themes throughout the

remaining books of the canon and God's calling to Israel to be a wisdom civilization.

CHAPTER 5: THE MINOR WISDOM BOOKS

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the four books following Proverbs in the Hebrew canon have special significance regarding wisdom (Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentation).[165] They uniquely contribute to the idea that the wisdom genre must be read politically by extending and magnifying Wisdom City themes introduced in the book of Proverbs. Although the order differs in modern English bibles, and the historical dating likewise breaks the order (with Ruth pointing back to the time of the judges), the canonical order manifests a very particular flow of ideas, relating the themes and concepts within these works back to the book of Proverbs.

This connection with Proverbs will be surveyed in this chapter. The relationship between these books can be described through several valuable analogies. First, consider the book of Proverbs acting as a large mountain in a range. It looks out over a valley and dominates the view. Smaller mountains in the range complement the scene and help to complete the viewscape. Another way to think of Proverbs is that of a mother who gives birth to her children, passing along specific shared characteristics. However, her children are also unique and display their own character. Finally, Proverbs and the four following books may be compared to a planet with four moons orbiting. Because of the significance of this collection, this paper will refer to these four books as the minor wisdom books, which is a description and a helpful imitation of the canonical title of the minor prophets. What can be said of the minor prophets can also be said here, namely that although they are short, they certainly do not lack significance.

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[165] Although he does not speak of the fourth Minor Wisdom book (Lamentations), Dempster recognizes the first three books in this survey, "The next three books—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs—can be viewed together, since they bear the imprimatur of Solomon." See Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 15, New Studies in Biblical Theology (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; Inter Varsity Press, 2003), 206.

Building on these analogies, a further important observation is that Proverbs and each of these associated books represent both continuities and discontinuities of ideas. Expositing the content by examining similarities and differences will help the reader see important connections to the broader thesis of this work, especially the relationship and coherence of wisdom and city concepts. One final caveat must be noted: although all four books do present wisdom and city ideas, they do not necessarily directly mention the words attached to these concepts as described in chapter 4 or the book of Proverbs. Because of this, it is helpful to think of the Wisdom City as appearing in both explicit and implicit ways.

Ruth (Wisdom Lived)

Barry Webb describes the book of Ruth as "a gentle book" and also as a "scroll of kindness."[166] The book's historical, romantic, and even comedic aspects have formed it into a significant literary work. It is also vital for the present study, particularly concerning Wisdom City themes. Although it maintains its narrative form throughout, the work is helpful towards the end of a political reading of the wisdom genre.

The historical provenance of the work is to be found in the era of the judges. However, canonically speaking, the book of Ruth immediately follows Proverbs. Köstenberger and Patterson comment, "Placing Ruth after Proverbs and among the wisdom books suggests that it is being read within a wisdom frame, with noble Ruth modeling wisdom virtues such as hard work."[167] Likewise, both works are connected thematically through the common use of the phrase "excellent woman," as found in Proverbs 31:10 and Ruth 3:11. Not only are the terms

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[166] Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments: Christian Reflections on the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 10, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Apollos; InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL; England, 2000), 37.

[167] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 144.

identical in Hebrew, but their textual and canonical proximity strongly suggest an intentional correlation of material.

The phrase in question presents two interesting possibilities related to textual history: (1) the final editor changed Ruth to match Proverbs by providing a canonical seam or stitch, or (2) the final editor of Proverbs *ruth-ified* the excellent woman by including the phrase previously attributed to Ruth. This dissertation holds to the second option: a historical work concerning Ruth was written long before David and Solomon, which originated the phrase "excellent woman." Regardless of the two interpretive choices, the implication is that the book of Ruth was intentionally connected to the wisdom corpus through this intertextual device. Not only does this justify the inclusion of the book of Ruth in the minor wisdom book category, as described above, but it makes for an intriguing invitation to consider both wisdom and city themes in the book.

Although the observation of this intertextual connection is not novel, the importance of the present thesis can be described by the analogy between Ruth and Boaz on the one hand and the wise woman and her husband on the other in Proverbs chapter 31. At a popular or reductionistic level, the fact that Proverbs 31 is actually about a married couple and not just about an individual woman is often missed. This is also true of the city context or background, as discussed in Chapter 2. One way to read Proverbs chapter 31 is to see the wise woman and her husband as a new type of Adam and Eve, albeit redeemed, working, and functioning as if in the context of a reversal of sin. Instead of tempting the man, the woman establishes him in the gates and produces and manifests a household. The fall is reversed, at least in the poetic space of the text.

Laura Quick argues *against* understanding the book of Ruth as a positive extension of the wisdom found in Proverbs, seeking to read it through a deconstructive or negative view. She describes her thesis as follows:

> Ruth attempts a destabilization of some of the authoritative claims made about conventional wisdom as expressed in the book of Proverbs. Categories of conventional wisdom are set up, only to be destabilized and complicated throughout the text. This reading of the book of Ruth brings it much closer to the other two texts that make up Israelite wisdom literature: the books of Job and Qoheleth."[168]

Quick's focus on various so-called destabilizations is intriguing but ultimately not convincing. She sees Ruth as the mediator between the strange woman and the valiant woman from Proverbs.[169] Likewise, she argues that in the book of Ruth, "Gender itself is subverted…" for example by the act of Ruth working in the fields, work normally reserved for a man.[170] It is hard to see Ruth as an exemplar of the woman in Proverbs who represents anti-wisdom. The narrative of Ruth does not present her in such a negative light. Rather, some of the awkwardness of the text Quick may be picking up on may be better explained as demonstrating Ruth's transformation from simple to sophisticated. Although she confesses the God of Israel from early in the narrative, little by little, she must learn what it means to integrate fully into an Israelite city. Further, the issue Quick misses entirely is the city background and its continuity with Proverbs. In some way, the book is not entirely about Ruth, but it is a story of the Israelite civilization and how it continues in the face of adversity under the providence of God. Thus, Quick's argument that Ruth demonstrates mainly discontinuity with Proverbs is to be rejected in favor of Wisdom City themes and the related transformation described in the previous chapter.

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[168] Laura Quick. "The Book of Ruth and the Limits of Proverbial Wisdom." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 139, no. 1 (2020): 47.

[169] Ibid., 61.

[170] Ibid., 62.

Although it is not stressed to the same degree as Proverbs, the city also appears along with the gate concept. In the book of Ruth, the word 'city' (עִיר) is mentioned four times: 1:19, 2:18, 3:15, and 4:2. 1:19 is an introductory city text: "So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them." 2:18 and 3:15 serve as stand-in words for Bethlehem, and 4:2 likewise locates Boaz and his encounter with the elders of the city of Bethlehem. The other central city-related term is gate (שַׁעַר), which occurs in 4:1, 4:10, and 4:11.

Unlike Proverbs, the city is not anonymous or archetypal but instead identifies with a historical place in Israel, namely the city of Bethlehem. It should also be noted that the book of Ruth sets its narrative in contrast between the land of Moab *and* Bethlehem. This 'tale of two peoples' sensibility is passed into the narrative, setting up a Job-like circumstance of loss. For it is in Moab that Naomi (and Ruth) are overcome by the tragedy of death. Loss of family, in this instance, was devasting and left Naomi in dire circumstances. Likewise, their return to Israel and Bethlehem specifically begins the reversal in the narrative.

David Firth makes a helpful argument regarding the relationship between foreigners and Israel in his work *Including the Stranger: Foreigners in the Former Prophets*. Although he spent most of his time focused on other books, he examines the significance of Ruth when he states, "… Ruth is best understood as an early witness to the interest in the place of foreigners that is explored across at least Judges and Samuel (links to Joshua and Kings are less pronounced) rather than as a key link between Judges and Samuel."[171] Firth's main thesis was that inclusion in Israel was always due to faith. Ethnic identity was always a secondary consideration. It should

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[171] David G. Firth, *Including the Stranger: Foreigners in the Former Prophets*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 50, New Studies in Biblical Theology (London; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 93.

come as no surprise that Ruth exemplifies such an inclusion into the monotheistic civilization of Israel through her confession in 1:16: "But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.'" Although the wording is not exact, in the context of the particular wisdom books of this study, it echoes the confession of wisdom herself in Proverbs chapter 9.

The malady-to-resolution structure formed in the book mimics the simple-sophisticated theme played out via the Wisdom City, as implied in the hermeneutic provided by the book of Proverbs. The narrative switches between two civilizations: Moab and Israel. Specifically, between the country of Moab and the city in Israel named Bethlehem. One difference between Proverbs and Ruth is that the understanding and use of the city device creates an interesting expansion in the text, from the singular archetypal city to the 'second city' of Bethlehem. The city is not meant to be a singular concept in the political theology of the Old Testament but instead reflects a multitude, i.e., a civilization. More will be said in forthcoming chapters about this concept, but it is useful to make the observation here since it provides an example and introductory device that further contributes to the "central wisdom chiasm" of Proverbs and its minor books. Although it might be said with slight hyperbole, Ruth and Bethlehem are the central characters in the book. Each has a role to play and contributes to the larger canonical narrative and progression.

Regarding the city's contribution, Schultz points out an important characteristic of such "urban civilization," namely that "cities have qualities of character."[172] Ruth 1:19 reveals that Bethlehem "stirred" at the arrival of Naomi and Ruth. Likewise, the elders of the city act

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[172] Schultz, "1615 עִיר," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 664.

honorably and rightly towards the request(s) of Boaz at the gate. Bethlehem manifests the fulfillment of the wisdom commission (Deut. 4:5-8) in that it can be understood as one of the wise cities of Israel that foreign nations will see. It acts as a covenant city where the blessing of Yahweh is present, in contrast to Moab, where death is found. Together, Bethlehem serves as a canonical exemplar of the Wisdom City.

A similar dynamic occurs with the character of Ruth. Boaz and Ruth are canonical types of husband and woman in Proverbs 31. Just like ch.31, the book of Ruth works towards a particular end or denouement. A progression occurs with its finale in the gate: "Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there" (Ruth 4:1). They exemplify what the final editor of Proverbs wanted the reader to understand. For this reason, Ruth belongs to the category of the minor wisdom books.

Song of Solomon (Wisdom Celebrated)

The Song of Solomon is perhaps one of history's most famous love poems. In addition to romantic themes, it has been heavily considered a theological work of the most profound quality. As one of the minor wisdom books, it also contributes to a political reading of the wisdom genre. Webb states, "The expression 'Song of Songs' (1:1) has the same form in Hebrew as the better-known 'Holy of Holies.'"[173] What many miss is that it is full of both wisdom and city themes. Such themes serve to not only tie the narrative together but also provide a rich background. Such details can also help the reader better understand the context of wisdom as it relates to Proverbs and the rest of Scripture.

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[173] Webb, *Five Festal Garments*, 22–28.

The outline of the Song is heavily debated. In his exhaustive commentary, Mitchell lists some 20 possible book outlines.[174] One of the more common outlines (one which Mitchell would endorse) is that of David Dorsey, who argues for a seven-point outline focusing on the center of the book, the wedding day. His outline reads as follows:

> A   opening words of mutual love and desire (1:2–2:7)
>   B   young man's invitation to the young woman to join him in the countryside (2:8–17)
>   C   young woman's nighttime search for the young man (3:1–5)
>   D   CENTER: their wedding day (3:6–5:1)
>   C′   young woman's nighttime search for the young man (5:2–7:11 [5:2–7:10])
>   B′   young woman's invitation to the young man to join her in the countryside (7:11–8:4)
> A'   closing words of mutual love and desire (8:5–14)[175]

A longstanding debate revolves around the secularity of the book. Does it completely speak to romance or is it a veiled theological exposition? Looking at Wisdom City themes in the book may help to resolve this in part because such a context or background connects the book's contents to the larger narrative and content of wisdom, especially Proverbs. As Clark explained, "However, there are still some who argue that the Song of Songs is a wisdom book, or at least that, in its canonical form, it exhibits evidence of a wisdom redaction and ought to be read as wisdom literature."[176] This essay would agree with the positive influence of a canonical framework for understanding the book.

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[174] Christopher Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 140-141.

[175] David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 200. Outline edited for formatting purposes.

[176] Clarke, "Seeking Wisdom in the Song of Songs," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom*, 101.

Clarke adds, "There is evidence of wisdom in the genre of the Song, in its instruction for women, in its parallels with the personified Woman Wisdom, and in the role of Solomon."[177] Likewise, Childs suggests that the mere appearance of Solomon's name in the title provides a wisdom context for the entire book, "By ascribing the Song to Solomon the collector did not rule out other later voices adding to the poem, as is evident from 8:11f. in which Solomon is himself the addressee. Nevertheless, some important claims are being made by the title which determine the context from which the book is to be interpreted."[178] Although this simple idea may be debated, it is helpful as part of the claim that the Song is part of the collection of minor wisdom books, which has previously been described.

The city in the Song of Solomon is not anonymous or archetypal, as in Proverbs. Rather, as in the book of Ruth, a specific city is mentioned for the context or background of the work. In this case, the city of Jerusalem is in view (1:5). Jerusalem is mentioned eight times in the book (1:5, 2:7, 3:5, 3:10, 5:8, 5:16, 6:4, 8:4). Zion is mentioned once in 3:11. In most cases, the city name is embedded with the poetic refrain, "O daughters of Jerusalem" (and once as "O daughters of Zion").[179] The consistent repetition of this appellation keeps the city concept in view throughout the book. Historical emphasis must predominate here over archetypal emphasis.

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[177] Rosalind Clarke, "Seeking Wisdom in the Song of Songs," in *Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson, US edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2017), 101.

[178] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979), 574. This quote was discovered through: Clarke, "Seeking Wisdom in the Song of Songs," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom*, 102.

[179] Cf. with the "son" or "sons" of the king in Proverbs.

However, since the Song is clearly expressed in a poetic form, the archetypal should not be excluded from the act of interpretation.[180]

When not referencing a historical place, the book does mention the term city (עִיר) explicitly. It is found throughout the text in 3:2, 3:3, & 5:7. Because of the city environment and the use of עִיר, the Song presents, in a similar manner to Proverbs descriptions of a middle city. In some cases, these terms and their uses are eerily similar to that of Proverbs. The city is meant to serve as the background of the work. One of the most useful interpretive paradigms regarding the text of the Song comes from observations of Marcia Falk in her short but insightful work entitled *Love Lyrics from the Bible*. Falk argues that there are four background settings in the book:

    (1) the country
        (a) the cultivated country
        (b) the wild country
    (2) The city
        (a) indoors (in the city)
        (b) outdoors (in the city)[181]

Webb describes the effect of Falk's categories by noting that "A different mood is created by each setting."[182] This arrangement is beneficial for systematizing the narrative environment as presented in the Song. It also can inspire a similar approach, which systematizes all of the data from the book of Proverbs and the minor wisdom books into an aesthetic template. The four

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[180] Compare the relationship of the historical and archetypal between Ruth and Song. Ruth and the Song both present specific historical contexts, yet they still differ in their emphasis with Ruth presenting strongly as a historical narrative (with minimal archetypal implications) versus that of the Song, which although sets itself up as a primarily historical poem, nonetheless can relish in the archetypal and metaphoric language of the poem. Such distinctions usefully contribute to an understanding of the breadth of differences of wisdom literature but also help define the minor wisdom books as a collection.

[181] Marcia Falk, *Love Lyrics from the Bible: A Translation and Literary study of The Song of Sons* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982).

[182] Webb, *Five Festal Garments*, 21. Webb's description of Falk's categories is recommended through his broader survey of Falk's position.

categories also deepen and expand the reader's understanding of the image of the city in Proverbs (and its contrasting environments).[183]

The Song of Songs contains many similar themes and an expanded city-scene vocabulary, but it differs from the book of Proverbs in that the Song primarily promotes marriage, in the context of the city, as the goal of wisdom. Although the book of Proverbs mentions marriage, it mainly focuses on Lady Wisdom vs. archetypal attractions, invitations, and seductions of Lady Foolishness. The Song has no such polarity of structure, focusing instead on the male-female relationship and entirely on the positive side of the presentation of love.

This love is primarily focused on the metaphor of the garden.[184] This literary device occurs in the textual center of the book, which in addition places it at the center of the imagery of the city. This fact creates an interesting comparison with Proverbs. In both books, the city surrounds.[185] In Proverbs, the Tree of Life is mentioned with its echo of Eden, ultimately leading to the city's center where the tower with the name of God is found. In the Song, the garden metaphor is deployed amidst the center of the city where the man remarks to the woman, "Your neck is like the tower of David…." (Song of Sol. 4:4). If one follows a primarily or exclusively

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[183] Webb and Falk both represent literary approaches to the text, Falk with an emphasis on the atomicity of poetic structures vs. Webb's unified approach. Webb states regarding Falk's overall approach to Songs: "It helps us to appreciate the richly lyrical character of the Song, its finely modulated emotional and tonal quality, and the many facets of love that it presents. But for all that, I believe that the division of the text into separate poems is unnecessary and unhelpful. There is strong evidence that the Song is in fact a single love poem, and much is lost if we fail to read it as such." See Webb, *Five Festal Garments*, 22.

[184] Chou stated, "The Song of Songs contains Edenic imagery that would show that the Song actually relates to Genesis.... Accordingly, wisdom literature is intertextual." See Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 52.

[185] Mitchell, who argued for an exclusively theological reading makes the following observation concerning the architectural motifs present in the songs, "A Jewish midrash states, 'In whatever place you find a wall against sexual immorality, there you find holiness.' To safeguard its sanctity, God has constructed a protective wall around sexuality like the casemate wall surrounding an ancient Israelite city. … The wall is fortified by larger scriptural themes, such as zeal for God's house (his temple and church), which requires the holy not to be profaned." See Christopher W. Mitchell, *The Song of Songs-Concordia Commentary* (Concordia Publishing, St. Louis: MO), 276.

theological interpretation of the Song, the coincidence of such relationships between city →

garden → tower ← garden ← city, should be noted (echoing the Wisdom City generic template

regarding the presence of God).

Ecclesiastes (Wisdom Contested)

The book of Ecclesiastes has vexed scholars for centuries with its contrarian views on

wisdom and life. As part of the collection of minor wisdom books, it advances the implied

canonical narrative starting after Proverbs involving various exemplars of wisdom, contributing

to a great political reading of wisdom. In particular, unlike Ruth and the Song, Ecclesiastes stops

to contemplate the limitations of wisdom.[186]

Like the previous two minor wisdom books, the background of Ecclesiastes does not

speak to the archetypal city but instead is centered within Jerusalem, mainly through the

identification of the king with that city (1:12) and various other references in 1:16, 2:7, and 2:9.

Of particular interest is the claim of Ecclesiastes 1:16, where Qoheleth states, "I said in my heart,

'I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart

has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.'" This statement by the speaker conflates

the historical and archetypal threads of wisdom, paralleling the larger wisdom narrative of the

Former Prophets.

Although the city concept does not receive as much focus as in the Song or Proverbs, the

book makes up for it with a massive emphasis on wisdom. After the book of Proverbs,

Ecclesiastes is the second most significant book for essential wisdom word references (see the

discussion in chapter 4). As a shorter book than Proverbs, the presence of wisdom themes is all

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[186] Dempster's view on the book is essentially negative: "In contrast, Ecclesiastes seems to deal not with the issue of blessing but with the problem of curse." See Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, 207.

the more significant, indicating a densely focused discourse. However, it should be noted that the city idea is not excluded and, like Proverbs, is present as a background image. Bringing this image forward slightly offers useful insights into the text in a similar way to the hermeneutic of reading Proverbs.

Although Ecclesiastes does not dwell on major city words, the book has a very lightly implied city background with a three-fold progression. These three background modes in Ecclesiastes can be listed as follows:

1- Jerusalem
2- The temple in Jerusalem
3- Provincial Israel

First, Qoheleth speaks at the city assembly. This is the broadest context for the book and his speech. Second, in 5:1, there is a brief interlude where the speaker describes walking up the steps to the temple. Although brief and not the exact center of the work, it does seem to offer a literary center of sorts. Immediately after, Qoheleth speaks of life in the "province" (מְדִינָה). It is unclear whether this background continues for the rest of the book or if the city background of Jerusalem re-emerges. One possibility is that the provincial mode or context extends through 7:29, wherein Qoheleth provides various examples and wisdom commentary related to specific things he had seen in his travels. This possible section comes to fruition in the statement of 7:19: "Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city." 8:1 changes the pace with the re-emergence of a focus on the king, suggesting a change of locus back to the city. The section begins with the question, "Who is like the wise" (8:1)?

Ecclesiastes is a difficult book to outline, so the suggested progression above should be understood as preliminary. The city motifs are only very lightly present. Nonetheless, this approach is valuable in considering the book in a new light. Reading Ecclesiastes according to

the hermeneutic suffix 'in the city' may provide a helpful background to some of the more

challenging aspects of the book. A possible city-focused outline using the three modes would

read as follows:

> 1 - Qoheleth's Introduction (1:1...)
> 2 - Commentary with Jerusalem and Kingship in focus
> 3 - Brief temple-focused center (5:1...)
> 4 - Provincial perspective
> 5 - Jerusalem focus
> 6 - Qoheleth's Conclusion (12:1...)

As mentioned in chapter 2, the idea of the city assembly was introduced. Although it is

only mentioned three times in Proverbs, it is an essential concept across Scripture. Ecclesiastes,

like Proverbs, does not dwell on the concept but interestingly presents the main voice of the

discourse as the "speaker," or in Hebrew qōhelet. Roland Murphy describes the overview of the

scholarly conversation of the meaning of Qoheleth when he states, "...the meaning of קהלת

(qōhelet) remains a mystery. In the broadest sense, it indicates that the author has something to

do with a קהל or congregation."[187]

The identity of the speaker (qōhelet) is disputed.[188] Conservatives mainly associate the

title with Solomon; others leave the speaker's identity as a mystery. One possibility, which does

not interfere with the claim of Solomonic authorship of the text, would be to identify qōhelet

with a political role within the assembly (similar to the idea suggested above when translating

qōhelet as a preacher). Rather, here, whoever is speaking in the assembly stands in the office of

qōhelet temporarily. A modern parallel would be the parliamentary environment of the House of

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[187] Roland Murphy, *Ecclesiastes, vol. 23A, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1992), 1.

[188] Numerous suggestions have been made about the meaning of this name, which occurs seven times in the book (1:1, 2, 12; 7:27; 12:8, 9, 10), once with the definite article (12:8). See Craig G. Bartholomew, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Ecclesiastes*, ed. Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 103.

Commons in Westminster or the Speaker's Office in the U.S. House of Representatives. Although one individual holds the speakership, others stand in the position regularly and are likewise addressed as 'speaker' when in that role.

The important implication for the Wisdom City narrative is that the verbiage, impact, and context of the assembly adds to the background image of the city as introduced in Proverbs. It is not hard to imagine Qoheleth speaking in an outdoor or indoor assembly somewhere in the middle-city near the tower (Prov 18:10) and the gates and walls, perhaps to the elders or nobility of the city representing the people. Finally, and put most simply, it can be said that Ecclesiastes adds to and develops the presence and theology of the assembly in the city beyond that of Proverbs.

The progression of the Wisdom City background image makes the contents of the book all the stranger and alien to the setting. Amidst this great city (which Ecclesiastes reveals as Jerusalem), what would lead Solomon (or any other speaker) to contest the benefit of wisdom so strongly? Likewise, canonically speaking, why would a book with such rhetorical force as Ecclesiastes be included in what has been, up to this point, a positive narrative progression (Proverbs --> Ruth--> Songs)?

One answer might be a generational change of sentiment. Although 1 Kings tends to emphasize Solomon and his failure to remain faithful amidst the polytheistic voices of his foreign wives, it is also entirely possible that the generation surrounding Solomon changed significantly. Solomon's early life represented an exciting expansion of the city and life of Israel. Between the reigns of David and Solomon, Jerusalem's expansion, and the building of the temple, it is hard to label this period as anything other than a golden age. In one interesting statement, Qohelet says, "So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can

the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done" (Eccles. 2:12). Could this reflect a recognition of the zenith of Israel as a built-country and an implicit connection between wisdom and building projects (or political expansion)? Likewise, Solomon laments, "I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun" (Eccles. 2:18-19).

As the next generation grew up, they did not perhaps have the same perspective, foundations, and outlook as their parents. This might be attributed in part to Solomon's reign. No doubt some of his reign's more human-focused elements may have created either resentment or indifference, which manifested as the next generation started coming to power. Perhaps then, Qoheleth was speaking of the limitations of wisdom after examining his life and the life of the coming generation. He foresaw the fleeting nature of the golden age devolving. Rather than being against wisdom, perhaps he finally sees that wisdom and its application are not easy. The force of his speech was that he sought to reground them in what was important: allegiance to the mono-theistic wisdom of God (Eccles. 12:13). Perhaps this was Solomon's 'back to the sources' moment.

One additional item of note is Solomon's admission in 2:18-19 of wisdom as being a tool of sorts, instrumental in the toil of his building (emphasis added):

> I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled **and used my wisdom** under the sun. This also is vanity.

This use is one of the few first-person statements to manifest the craftmanship aspect of wisdom as a simple matter of a colloquialism. Solomon essentially says, "I built the city with wisdom," echoing the instrumentality of wisdom in Proverbs 8.

Lamentations (Wisdom Lost)

The book of Lamentations is one of the most explicitly city-focused books in Scripture. Unlike Proverbs, the book describes Jerusalem's historical (vs. the archetypal) city and its fall into destruction at the hands of the Babylonians. Webb insightfully describes the book through comparison when he states, "If the Song of Songs is the supreme song, Lamentations is the eternal lament of the Jewish people."[189]

Of the four minor wisdom books, it is undoubtedly the most tragic, drastically changing the narrative flow, which starts with Proverbs. The appearance of the sorrow the book represents is somewhat softened and appropriate given the dour view of Ecclesiastes. With Lamentations, a particular narrative trajectory becomes pronounced and recognizable: the loss of wisdom leads to the city's destruction. In this sense, Lamentations creates the right side of the spectrum. On the left side is the book of Proverbs, with its celebration, acknowledgment, and confession of monotheistic-based wisdom. The city is established, and there is rejoicing at the gates. Ruth and Songs echo the liveliness of these themes. However, starting with Ecclesiastes, the limitations of wisdom or, more accurately, sinful humanity's attempt to subvert wisdom enter the story, and the final result is the loss of the city. What this spectrum shows is not the inevitability of destruction, as Ecclesiastes might infer, but the state of rejection of wisdom. Although Lamentations speaks of the historical city, i.e., Jerusalem, the historical instance of its fall is so momentous that it paradoxically becomes an archetype of the city rejecting wisdom, again reinforcing opposite poles on the spectrum. Likewise, the poetic instantiation of the book lends itself to a development of the archetypal approach to the city.

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[189] Webb, *Five Festal Garments*, 59.

In addition to a canonical spectrum, the book also manifests a sort of historical-inclusio which begins with Solomon in Proverbs. Starting with Solomon in Proverbs, the entire sequence progresses until 2 Kings 25 (except for Ruth, written during the period of the Judges). Thus, the eschatological and historical narrative explored in Chapter 2 relating to the progression of Proverbs is extended by Lamentations.

One of the immediate implications of Lamentations regarding wisdom is simple: rejecting wisdom results in ruin, not establishment. Lamentations serves not only the logical end of foolishness but also of the covenant stipulations going back to Deuteronomy and the Torah. About wisdom, it reflects the opposite state and circumstance intended by the wisdom commission (Deut. 4:5-8). In Deuteronomy chapter 4, the reader is told that the nations would look at Israel and see it as a wisdom civilization. But the opposite is true in Lamentations. Judah has seen "the nations enter her sanctuary" (1:10). Judah even "dwells now among the nations..." (1:3). The narrator also announces: "...all her gates are desolate" (1:4). Even in the opening verses of Lamentation, an allegory of romantic reversal is used to describe Jerusalem (cf. Song of Solomon).

Canonically speaking, Lamentations forms a sort of inclusio with the book of Proverbs in several ways. First, the book of Proverbs begins with the city sequence, while Lamentations completes it. Second, Proverbs, although mainly aphoristic, historically is centered on the reign and writing of Solomon, or the golden age of Israel during the united monarchy. By contrast, Lamentations comes at the literal end after the destruction of that kingdom (including both Israel and Judah). Third, Proverbs begins the sequence by focusing on the archetypal nature of the city, offering a strong association between polity and wisdom. Lamentations, on the other hand, showcases the historical fall of Jerusalem, although it does so with such poetic complexity that it

also embraces and echoes the archetypal city of Proverbs. Fourth, Proverbs tells of the exaltation of the city, whereas Lamentations spells out the telos of a city without wisdom: destruction. Fifth, Proverbs and Lamentations utilize various acrostic structures. Thus, the collection of Wisdom City works begins and ends with acrostics. Finally, the book of Proverbs introduces the Wisdom City, whereas Lamentations presents an anti-Wisdom City.

The book of Lamentations contains many themes, especially relating to the loss of Jerusalem. However, the city is only the stage upon which the greater covenant drama is played out for Israel and the reader of Lamentations. One of the final observations of this profound book is the rare admission that it enters into the political discourse of Scripture. On the lips of scoffers, it places one of the most amazing observations, "All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem: 'Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth'" (Lam. 2:15)? Although the description of Jerusalem as the "perfection of beauty" and "joy of all the earth" is applied in the historical context, it can also be extended as a matter of a descriptor of the archetypal city. That is, one of the goals of the political discourse formed here in Scripture is the expectation of the superlative sense and description of the city. The godly city is one of "beauty" and "joy."

Conclusion

All four minor wisdom books, as described in this chapter, offer their own unique view on the relationship between the concepts of city and wisdom. This particular offering underscores the notion, along with Proverbs, that the wisdom genre is more complex than many admit. The details of these short but significant works contribute clearly to a political reading of the wisdom genre and lead the reader to better understand how to create or maintain the godly society.

CHAPTER 6: THE MYSTERY OF WISDOM

Chapters 1 through 5 of this work have primarily dealt with either introductory matters or the presentation of the thesis, involving a description of the Wisdom City in Proverbs and its associated hermeneutical philosophy. In chapters 6-8, the focus of this study will change by examining how an improved reading of the wisdom genre (given the political claims of the thesis) allows for a better reading of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

One of the rallying cries of the Reformation was *Scripture interprets Scripture*. The more plain and forthright parts of Scripture help shed light on those with less clarity. Such an approach dovetails with the doctrine of progressive revelation.[190] As the story of the canon was unfolding throughout the ages, complexity and further enlightenment occurred regarding how to read past revelation. This can particularly be understood in the revelatory effects of the advent of Jesus Christ--whose person, work, ministry, and Gospel provide the rest of the story and context for the narrative that precedes his arrival.

This dissertation argues that something similar happens with wisdom. An improved reading of wisdom, which comes about through the Wisdom City concept and hermeneutic, helps the reader to understand wisdom across the canon. Wisdom, or the narrative of wisdom in Scripture, takes on a similar dynamic to the revelation of Jesus. In the same way that Jesus must be understood between the testaments (whether through continuity or discontinuity) as a reference for the promise-fulfillment progression or simply as the "mystery revealed" (Col.

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[190] Erickson helpfully summarizes the concept of progressive revelation and distinguishes it from evolutionary models of the text, "We should also note that this revelation is progressive. Some care needs to be exercised in the use of this term, for it has sometimes been used to represent the idea of a gradual evolutionary development. That approach, which flourished under liberal scholarship, regarded sections of the Old Testament as virtually obsolete and false; they were only very imperfect approximations of the truth. The idea we are here suggesting, however, is that later revelation builds on earlier revelation, complementing and supplementing, rather than contradicting it." See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd ed*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 164.

1:26), wisdom should also be given a similar role. That is wisdom, although it is present from the beginning of the narrative in Genesis, is only partly revealed before Proverbs. Thus, the title of this chapter is "Mystery of Wisdom."

Without the prominence of Proverbs, the minor wisdom books, and the wisdom city concept, such a hermeneutical move would not be so obvious. Wisdom as a genre or topic might remain an elementary or primitive concept, perhaps more aligned with ancient Near Eastern parallels. This begins to change in the book of Deuteronomy, where the context of wisdom becomes seated within a political context.

Another significant development in this work can be formally introduced: the idea of civilization. Until this point, the wisdom-political connection has revolved mainly around the exposition of the archetypal city, not entire civilizations. However, Scripture makes it clear that its political theology does not extend to a single city but rather distributes those related characteristics to every polity, whether the household, a village, city, or the civilization of an entire nation. As will be exposited shortly, Deuteronomy 4 presents Israel's wisdom commission, foreshadowing and outlining the importance of wisdom. Before delving into expositional material, it is helpful to define some of the political terms used moving forward, as best possible, given their use in the text:

> *City*: a single habitation involving a clear separation by a wall or other means, often with a city center.
>
> *Village or town*: a daughter habitation, often in deference to a regional mother city.
>
> *Civilization*: the aggregation of any of the above political types, usually within a distinct national system.
>
> *The civilization of Israel*: all of the distinct political spaces that have an intentional "way" (דֶּרֶךְ) connecting them to the city of Jerusalem (especially given the presence of Yahweh at the center).

The development of wisdom before Proverbs will be examined through the study of three parts of the early canon: (1) within the Torah, (2) within the Former Prophets (before Solomon's reign), and finally, (3) via a miscellany of Davidic Psalms. The mystery of wisdom is defined through the Torah, which is formed with legal material and the developing political context of ancient Israel.

Wisdom City in the Torah

Wisdom is found referenced throughout the Torah. Some scholars have even proposed that it is a significant theme in the book of the Pentateuch. As Sailhamer comments, "Moses wrote it as a source of divine wisdom and meditation, not as a book of law."[191] Sailhamer's expanded position differs from that of some Jewish and evangelical scholars who credit most of the final form of the Pentateuch to Moses. However, Sailhamer's primary assertion was essentially correct: wisdom matters in the Torah.[192] Likewise, this emphasis will be shown to contribute to a greater political understanding of the genre.

Wisdom as a concept is found in all the Torah books, with a particular emphasis on Exodus. Like wisdom, matters of polity are substantial throughout the Torah. Many references to cities are simply descriptions of historical places, although archetypal ideas are also presented. Deuteronomy, in particular, references a great deal of city language, especially in relation to law. When both wisdom and city concepts are considered together in the Torah, they make for an intriguing foundation for things to come in the narrative. On one level, it can be said that the

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[191] Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 28.

[192] Ibid. Sailhamer went beyond this simple idea, stating, "It was the later prophets who, after much meditation ("day and night") on the words of Moses, produced the Pentateuch that we have today, the canonical Pentateuch."

Torah and the early canon present wisdom as a promise of sorts, interweaved amidst promises of

land and covenant, but which later become manifest as Scripture progresses.

<div align="center">Wisdom City Readings in Genesis</div>

It has been said that Genesis is a book of many beginnings. It is the beginning of the

Torah, which describes the creation of all things, the origination of the Jewish people, and

ultimately starts the entire narration of Scripture. Wisdom likewise makes its beginning in the

book, specifically in Genesis 3:4-7, which reads (emphasis added):

> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when
> you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and
> evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to
> the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one **wise**, she took of its fruit and
> ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then, the eyes
> of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.[193]

The word for 'wise' in this context is śāḵal (לְהַשְׂכִּיל) … not חָכְמָה. It is a *hiphil* infinitive

construct. It is essential to note the word choice here for śāḵal represents a more generalized

choice regarding wisdom.[194] It may simply mean something akin to success more than wisdom in

the same technical sense and range of חָכְמָה.[195] Nonetheless, the reference here must be taken into

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[193] The combination of concepts in this pericope is eerily similar, although not completely so, to that of Van
Leeuwen's wisdom refrain (introduced in chapter 1 of this paper) which references three key ideas: wisdom,
understanding, and knowledge (hoḵmâ, tĕḇûnâ, and daʿat) in close proximity. In this Genesis reading the similar
concepts are "knowing," "delight to the eyes" (similar to insight) along with the idea of wisdom (although here it is
not hoḵmâ). Because of these similarities, perhaps this section functions as a proto-wisdom refrain or triad which
will become more firmly expressed in the first official reference which is found in Exodus 31. The incompleteness
of the wisdom refrain here underscores the "mystery" of wisdom in the early canon.

[194] The Septuagint does *not* translate śāḵal here with the idea of sophia, Ge 3:6: "καὶ εἶδεν ἡ γυνὴ ὅτι καλὸν
τὸ ξύλον εἰς βρῶσιν καὶ ὅτι ἀρεστὸν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἰδεῖν **καὶ ὡραῖόν ἐστιν τοῦ κατανοῆσαι**, καὶ λαβοῦσα τοῦ
καρποῦ αὐτοῦ ἔφαγεν" (emphasis added). See Logos digital edition, Septuaginta: With Morphology, electronic ed.
(Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979).

[195] See Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 1 Genesis 1-15* (Word Books Publisher, 1987),
63. Wenham summarized one possibility of wisdom here in relation to the phrase "knowledge of good and evil,"
associating it with omniscience. He states, "'Good and evil' here stand for the parts which make up the whole, just
as the phrase "heaven and earth" means the universe."

consideration. Waltke describes the term as follows, "This is better understood as 'prudence' or 'competence'…."[196] Goldingay concurs, stating, "But it is a more ambiguous word than *ḥākām*, the word usually translated 'wise,' and in this context, it has the advantage that it makes for a paronomasia with the word naked in the previous verse (*ʿārûmîm*, in the plural)."[197]

Within such confines of meaning, it must still be admitted that the choice of a wisdom word in this early and vital section of the text is significant. More outlandish claims can be excluded, such that Eve saw the goodness of knowledge but a petty God who wanted humanity to stay in some state of ignorance punished humanity for daring to reach out to know or that somehow eating the fruit provided immediate occult knowledge. Instead, the wise characteristic that Eve sees in eating the fruit is better understood as a prototypical moment. In essence, Eve is not deciding whether to eat fruit per se but whether she will listen to God in obedience and whether she will approach knowledge with God in his timing or not. Wenham, summarizing this moment, states:

> It is easy to see that God has wisdom and that children lack it, but more difficult to see why it was forbidden to man. The acquisition of wisdom is seen as one of the highest goals of the godly, according to the book of Proverbs. But the wisdom literature also makes it plain that there is a wisdom that is God's sole preserve, which man should not aspire to attain (e.g., Job 15:7-9; Prov 30:1-4) …. To pursue it without reference to revelation is to assert human autonomy, and to neglect the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge (1:7).[198]

The garden provides a starting point for the story of humanity; it also provides the nexus of theological activity in Scripture between God and man. Although it is called a garden (גַּן), it

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[196] Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 92.

[197] John Goldingay, *Genesis, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 73.

[198] Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 1 Genesis 1-15*, 63.

can also be considered a proto-culture or proto-type of the Wisdom City. This is the case because Adam and Eve together represent human society in totality. Likewise, the presence of God in the midst of the garden signifies a complete, albeit nascent, political vision for humanity. The narrative shifts from the ideal of standing in the presence of God in civilization towards expulsion into the wilderness. The fall and subsequent separation between God and humanity had individual repercussions, as well as social and political ones: Adam and Eve are excluded from this ideal wisdom society. Prefigured in this narrative moment is the same "in" and "out" of the Wisdom City hermeneutic. Within the garden is the wisdom civilization with God at the center. Outside is separation due to sin. The simple-to-sophisticated hermeneutic (as previously introduced) comes into play.

In Genesis 3, the idea of wisdom is generically introduced into the narrative. At this point, it is vague and generally associated with some particular knowledge range, primarily dependent on one's relationship with the creator. Likewise, the idea of the city is present, albeit in undeveloped form, waiting to become more prominent in later Torah books such as Deuteronomy (and Proverbs).[199] In Genesis, the introduction of the city operates in a kind of textual middle between the appearance of wisdom and the book's denouement, which centers on the story of Joseph. Early on, the famous Tower of Babel, along with its associated city, makes an appearance, "Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the

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[199] See Carl Schultz, "1615 עִיר," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 664–665. "The Bible represents urban civilization as having begun with Cain who built a city and named it after his son, Enoch. In the tables of the descendants of Noah (Gen 10) several cities are mentioned, cities which were built after the dispersion from the tower of Babel (Gen 11). Some scholars think on the basis of these two passages that there is an antipathy toward the city in Genesis (cf. G. Wallis, "Die Stadt in den Uberlieferungen des Genesis," ZAW 78 (1966): 133–148). But Hulst argues that such a judgment is not true to the witness of the OT. Thus cities are a good gift of the lord to Israel (Deut 6:10) and the sin in Genesis 11 is not the building of the city (THAT, II, p. 271). Cities continued to be prevalent in the scripture up to the very end of Revelation where the new Jerusalem is described (Rev. 21 and 22)."

whole earth.' And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built" (Gen. 11:4-5). The parallel here to the Wisdom City in Proverbs should especially be noted. The builders seek to build a city (עִיר) and a tower (מִגְדָּל). This parallels the arrangement of the city image in Proverbs, a city with a tower in the middle (18:10). Thus, the city of man and the city of God have a similar form but a very different theological orientation. The Wisdom City hermeneutic provided by Proverbs allows the reader to make this contrast by seeing and comparing the incipient city form in the Genesis narrative.

Like Abraham, Moses is also caught up in God's plan to restore the Wisdom City and fulfillment of his promise of a land for the people of Israel. This land was not merely a territory but included cities and the blessings of a godly polity. At the heart of this land especially was the theological reality of God's presence, exemplified in the worship at the Tabernacle and, ultimately, the temple. Here, God was inviting his redeemed people back into a type of the garden, where again wisdom was established in relationship to His guidance and presence.

Toward the end of the book, the manifestation of wisdom becomes more complex. This can be seen particularly in the story of Joseph. There is debate regarding how the Joseph narrative fits into Genesis. What genre is it? Some contemporary scholars in the historical-critical camp have taken a negative view on ascribing any particular wisdom role to Joseph.

On the other hand, Gerhard von Rad argued that the Joseph story was a wisdom novella. Quick summarizes von Rad's position helpfully when she states, "He therefore broadened the category of biblical wisdom literature from comprising merely the books of Proverbs, Qoheleth, and Job to include other texts too, opening up the possibility that narrative and psalms could also be understood as wisdom literature."[200] Von Rad's helpful contribution reinforces the thesis of

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[200] Quick, "The Book of Ruth and the Limits of Proverbial Wisdom," *Journal of Biblical Literature*: 50.

this dissertation, namely that wisdom as a genre is widespread, encompasses narrative, and ultimately is tied together by political themes.[201]

The resolution between these two views involves reading from the perspective of Wisdom City as outlined in the book of Proverbs. Looking back at Genesis, the reader can see the fusion between wisdom themes and the motif of the city or civilization. In the case of Joseph, both of these ideas are woven together in the story of his life, which characterizes his role as primarily that of a civilization builder (or sustainer). Joseph stands at the end of Genesis as an example of the blessing of God, which is promised earlier in the narrative. It also foreshadows what is to come for Israel, namely the idea of establishment and rule. Egypt can be seen as a hostile place conquered by Joseph or as a symbol for the world, which must be overcome by God's people. What conquers it is Joseph's God-given wisdom through his interpretation of dreams and shrewd administration of Egypt on behalf of Pharaoh. Thus, von Rad is more correct than not to see the Joseph story as part of the wisdom genre. The idea of a novella may imply some disconnected form, so in contrast to von Rad and other historical-critical scholars, the story of Joseph must be seen as an integral development within the narrative.

Thus, albeit with a bit of hyperbole, it can be said that Genesis produces a sort of Wisdom City dialectic as the two ideas are introduced, developed, and related throughout the narrative. They each become more significant in their respective threads but then ultimately manifest together in a wisdom-political fusion in the story of Joseph and his sojourn in Egypt.

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[201] Crenshaw further qualifies Von Rad's impact on the identification of wisdom when he states, "Impetus for the new tendency was furnished by von Rad's provocative study of the Joseph narrative, an article that has been almost directly responsible for similar claims of wisdom influence upon Ruth and the 'succession document.'" See J. L. Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon 'Historical' Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (June 1969): 129.

Wisdom City Readings in Exodus

Although the book of Genesis is a book of many beginnings, it is Exodus that introduces

the concept of חָכְמָה formally into the narrative of Scripture. Oddly, it appears once at the start of

the book when the new Pharaoh (who did not know Joseph) states, "Come, let us deal shrewdly

with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us

and escape from the land" (Exod. 1:10). Thus, right at the beginning, the new Pharaoh seeks to

employ wisdom in his planning. Likewise, in 7:11, the reader is introduced to the wise men of

the court. Then, within the textual space of Exodus, wisdom does not return until chapters 28-36,

where it becomes manifest in the building of the Tabernacle, where God himself will dwell.[202] A

wisdom-gap forms.

This textual 'gap' is a phenomenon described by Meir Sternberg, who states, "In works

of greater complexity, the filling-in of gaps becomes much more difficult and therefore more

conscious and anything but automatic."[203] The in-between of such a gap is as vital as the

positively stated material on either side. In this case, the Exodus narrative begins with a shrewd

Pharaoh with his wise counselors. By the end of the book, God has given instructions to Moses

to build, by wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, a tabernacle for His presence. What

happens in between? Within the gap, the wisdom of Pharaoh as ruler of Egypt is decisively

defeated. A battle of wisdoms ensues. In this sense, Exodus forms an inclusio of divine claims,

with Pharaoh as a would-be god on one side and Yahweh on the other. Each had his station,

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[202] The first of Van Leeuwen's wisdom refrains occurred here in 31:1-5 (emphasis added): "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with **wisdom**, with **understanding**, with **knowledge** and with all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts'" (NIV). The appearance of the wisdom refrain with the building of the tabernacle makes it a significant textual marker and worthy of note when it reappears later in the biblical narrative.

[203] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, IL (1987), 187.

Pharaoh in Egypt, and God, his tabernacle. Both utilize wisdom, but one does so towards futility

and ruin, the other towards building beauty and political establishment.

The simple-to-sophisticated hermeneutic of Proverbs usefully comes into play in such a

reading. On the one hand, stands the "simple" Pharaoh, who, from his own limited perspective,

believes he is wise. He has bought into the lie Eve fell for: one can be wise based on one's

timing and context, apart from Yahweh. The Hebrews (and ultimately Israel) stand between

these two great powers, somewhat like pawns in a chess game (and literally in the narrative gap).

Pharaoh enslaved them (made them fools living in simplicity), but Yahweh sought to free them

and establish them in the sophistication of their land and city (cities). It can be said that the

wisdom of Pharaoh and his advisors fails miserably (via evil counsel and failed magic).

Meanwhile, the men employed by Yahweh use wisdom successfully towards the end of building

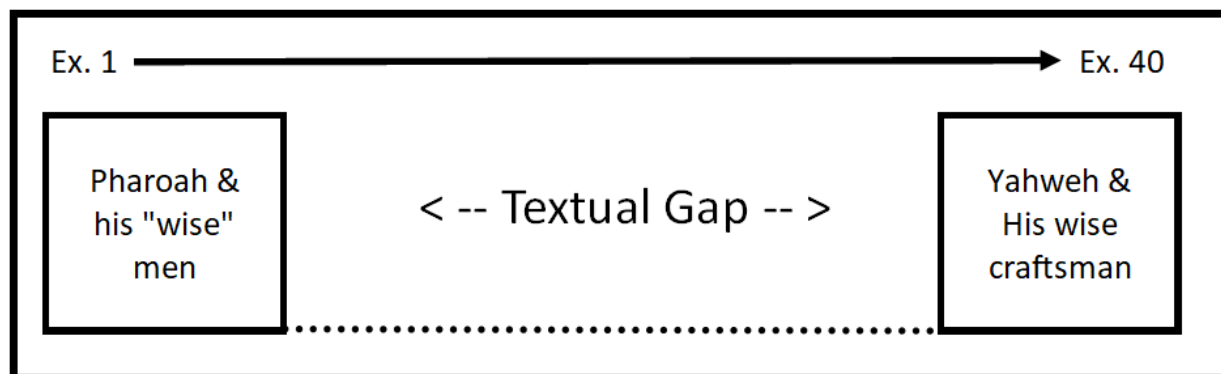the Tabernacle. True wisdom is made manifest through its fruit.

Figure 12 - Contrasting Wisdom in Exodus

Wisdom City Readings in Leviticus

Although the book of Leviticus is short on direct themes of wisdom and city life, it does

reinforce the essential center of the Wisdom City concept, which is the presence of God in the

midst of His people, highlighted by the associated practices of sacrifice, cleanliness, worship,

and sanctification. As Michael Grisanti points out, "As is the case with other OT books, the Hebrew title of Leviticus is the first word of the book: 'and he called' (wayyiqrā')."[204] Prefiguring the calling of wisdom to the simple in the wisdom city, Leviticus begins with a revelatory speech act: "The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying…" (Lev. 1:1).

Ultimately, the book of Leviticus points the way to the gracious presence of Yahweh among his people. Although heavily cultic in nature, the commandments, procedures, and principles in Leviticus point to a God who works to bring his people back into his presence, in reversal of the fall of humanity. In this broad sense, being in God's presence involves a return to the heart of the vision of the Wisdom City: dwelling in a society focused on a merciful God and his righteousness. L. Michael Morales speaks in detail about this reality:

> The tabernacle has a twofold theological meaning. It is first the dwelling of God, YHWH's home, and secondly the tabernacle is also the way to God's house, that is, the way to God himself, to engage with him in fellowship. Stated differently, the tabernacle is not only God's house, the place of his Presence, but is the ordained way of approaching the divine Presence…[205]

Like Exodus and the later legal material of Deuteronomy, the text of Leviticus speaks specifically to city life in a helpful way, which helps to fill in some of the gaps in the civilizational vision of Israel. One such contribution from Leviticus is the distinction between the outside (חוץ) and the inside of the city. In a reflection of a concern with sanctification and cleanness, the laws in Leviticus detail several important city scenarios: stones from unclean or diseased homes are to be taken "outside the city" (Lev. 14:40), right of return to a house in a

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[204] Michael A. Grisanti, "The Book of Leviticus," in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 217.

[205] L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 37, New Studies in Biblical Theology* (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2015), 109.

"walled city" (Lev. 25:29) was to be maintained, and descriptions of Levitical property in the cities (Lev. 25:33) further emphasize the importance of the urban locale for God's purposes.

<div align="center">Wisdom City Readings in Numbers</div>

Numbers mostly recounts the wilderness wanderings of the people of Israel. The Hebrew title, בְּמִדְבַּר, "in the wilderness," captures the primary sense of the book. In chapter 4, the wilderness as a concept was introduced as an antonym to the city. The wilderness as a state of affairs is opposite of the intended blessing of Israel. Although the issues Numbers raises are resolved in later parts of the Torah and Scripture, it is essential to dwell on a critical concept related to the emergence of the Wisdom City: centrality.

As previously noted, the idea of the city in the ancient world involved clear delineation, usually by building a significant wall. Although primarily for defensive purposes, such walls would also define the city's center, including all aspects of life, including the seat of government and the religious center of a people (Gen. 22:17, 28:17, Exod. 20:10, Deut. 17:5, Josh. 20:4, Ruth 4:1, 2 Sam. 19:8, 2 Chron 8:14, 3, Ps. 100:4, Amos 5:10, Prov. 31:23, 31:31, Heb. 13:12). In Proverbs, it has been shown that the Wisdom City was walled with a center, where the tower of the name of Yahweh was present (18:10), along with a stronghold. The very house of wisdom is built in the city's heights (9:1). Going back to Genesis, the reader is informed that God walked amidst the garden with Adam and Eve.

The book of Numbers introduces centrality, albeit without a city. Numbers 2:1-2 describes this scenario, "The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'The people of Israel shall camp each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' houses. They shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side.'" This mobile city or civilization of Israel was to be built around God via the formation of the tribes around the Tabernacle. Thus, at the center of this

proto-Wisdom City was the wisdom-formed tabernacle constructed for the very presence of God. This tabernacle city parallels and prefigures the development of the Wisdom City of Proverbs. The gathering of Israel around the tabernacle was only temporary until the temple could be built. That is, wisdom in this text later becomes manifest in the archetypal Wisdom City of Proverbs (and the historical city of Jerusalem).

<div align="center">Wisdom City Readings in Deuteronomy</div>

Köstenberger and Patterson point out that "…the strategic positioning of Deuteronomy suggests that it is a bridge between the Pentateuch and the rest of the Old Testament."[206] Thus, its contents are essential for understanding the following narrative and civilizational themes. Out of all the books of the Torah, the book of Deuteronomy has the most references to the concept of the city (x53). Although some of these references are appellative, many are set within the confines of hortatory and legal material, which sets a forward-looking vision for Israel's civilizational and urban life.

Wisdom in Deuteronomy is presented less explicitly than in Proverbs. Nonetheless, it is present and can be seen particularly in Deuteronomy's approach to the relationship between wisdom and law. Bartholomew observes that, "In Old Testament theology the relationship between law and wisdom remains a controversial issue."[207] He adds, "My suggestion therefore is that law and wisdom share an underlying and often tacit presupposition of a 'carved' creation order."[208] There are so many intertextual connections between the Torah and the rest of Scripture, and Proverbs in particular, that such an approach cannot be easily discounted.

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[206] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 137.

[207] Craig G. Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson (Apollos, 2016), 24.

[208] Ibid, 25.

Much of the Wisdom City content of the book is summarized and brought into focus via the previously mentioned wisdom commission: Deuteronomy 4:5-8.[209] The book of Deuteronomy speaks to two major approaches: internal and external. Israel's wisdom vocation, on the one hand, was to have an internal dimension in that Israel was to be faithful to God and his laws. On the other, the external dimension, manifested via the establishment of a theocentric wisdom civilization, was to be a witness to the surrounding nations.

This wisdom calling in Deuteronomy is rooted in the deeper narrative of the book, with its emphasis on the covenant relationship with God and the subsequent approach of fearing the Lord. J. A. Grant stated, "It is Deuteronomy 10:12-13 that provides the 'dictionary definition' of the fear of Yahweh as it functions throughout the rest of Scripture."[210] The text reads:

> And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good (Deut. 10:12-13)?

It is easy to see how such concepts connect with the book of Proverbs (1:7). As Von Rad describes, "The statement that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom was Israel's most special possession."[211] This peculiar beginning of wisdom, focusing on the monotheistic confession of Yahweh, grounds both the political theology of Deuteronomy and the Wisdom City image of Proverbs by connecting it to a critical narrative thread in the Old Testament and, ultimately, all of Scripture.

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[209] The information in this section was adapted from material from papers by the author of this dissertation from BIBL 715 (Hermeneutics) & OBST 830 (Former Prophets) at Liberty University.

[210] J. A. Grant, "Wisdom and Covenant," ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 861.

[211] Gerhard Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 68.

In Deuteronomy, the reader can see some of the prototypical concepts of wisdom and city begin to emerge, which will be developed later in the canon. In some ways, Proverbs is like a magnified version of Deuteronomy.

Wisdom City in the Former Prophets (Joshua through 1 King 10:29)

Wisdom City Readings in Joshua and Judges

Immediately following the Torah, the narrative of the conquest comes to the front and center, focusing on the story of Joshua. The textual pivot here arguably is based on a canonical seam, as detailed by Sailhamer, who states, "Elsewhere I have suggested that the Hebrew Tanak is shaped around two sets of compositional seams, Deuteronomy 34, and Joshua 1, as well as Malachi 3 and Psalm 1. Deuteronomy 34 and Malachi 3 look forward to the return of an age of prophecy."[212] The extension of the Torah, via these seams, includes the idea of wisdom, which is significant to the present thesis. In Deuteronomy 34 it was said, "And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses" (Deut. 34:9). On the other side of the seam, in the book of Joshua, the reader is informed:

> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go (Josh. 1:8-9).

The wording here in Joshua echoes much of the promise language relating to land, city, and wisdom in the book of Deuteronomy. That is, Joshua will lead Israel into being a covenant people in the promised land, fulfilling the promise of the wisdom commission (Deut. 4:5-8):

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[212] Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 169.

"Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"

A generic Wisdom City reversal can be seen between the narrative of Joshua and Judges. Looking back from the perspective of Wisdom City in Proverbs, the text at the beginning of the Former Prophets demonstrates a sophisticated-to-simple reversal pattern. The early victory that Moses and Joshua had, with the Lord's help, is reversed by the foolishness of the people in the story of Judges. This can be seen early in the book where the reader is informed that "And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them and bowed down to them" (Judg. 2:12). They abandoned the fear of Yahweh, which was to characterize their inner life, which Proverbs later reveals as a necessary foundation for wisdom. Thus, the people fell into political disrepute and chaos, an opposite state of civilization. The end of the book describes the tragedy of the narrative, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25).

Wisdom City in 1 Samuel through 1 Kings (Pre-Solomon).

In the Former Prophets, the narrative of Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon covers a vast amount of material ranging from the beginning of 1 Samuel into 1 Kings. In particular, David's life is especially interesting here due to his contributions in forming the "Wisdom Nation." Although Solomon receives much of the attention due to his authorship of Proverbs, it was David who, in many ways, set the stage for the Wisdom City image, which powerfully connects the ideas and aphorisms of the book of Proverbs. After all, Jerusalem became known as the "city of David" (2 Sam. 5:10). The siege and capture of the city is recounted in 2 Samuel 5:1-14. The

story involves a set of complex threads. For one, a transfer of power happens at this time wherein David moves his seat of government from Hebron to Jerusalem. Second, the actual conquering of Jerusalem is recorded:

> And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David (2 Sam. 5:6-7).

Along with the brief description of taking the city (from the Jebusites), several noteworthy city names and phrases appear (a parallel account is given in 1 Chron. 10:4-9). Jerusalem here is called "the stronghold of Zion" (5:7), "the city of David" (5:7), or just "the stronghold" (5:9). In 1 Chronicles, the original name of the city is given as "Jebus" (1 Chron. 10:4). The reader is also told of his expansion efforts: "And David built the city all around from the Millo inward" (2 Sam 5:9). Thus, this section shows that not only was David gifted as a military leader, but he was a city and civilization builder. His building and expansion of the city in wisdom set the stage for Solomon's rule. In some ways, Solomon grew up in David's city and world and then only completed it; through these observations and examples, he was formed.

Along with the glories of David's reign came limitations. David failed to bring the ark into the city, and although he planned to build a temple to the Lord, he was stopped. Wisdom has not yet come to its full expression in the time of David. It broke forth in many ways, for example, with the founding of the historical city of Jerusalem, a critical step before Solomon described the archetypal city image of Proverbs. The greater manifestation of wisdom, for example, with the building of the temple, would have to wait until the reign of Solomon.

Wisdom City in the Davidic Psalms

The story of David, described in the previous section, provides a background to the Davidic Psalter, often recognized as constituting Psalms 3-41, 51-72, and 138-145.[213] A brief survey will be conducted to describe some of the Wisdom City themes that are present. David's psalms focus on deliverance from enemies, personal piety, or repentance. These themes reflect the historical circumstances of the life of David as recounted in 1 and 2 Samuel. A brief survey of several Psalms from this collection will describe some of the Wisdom City themes present (Pss. 9, 51, & 72).

Psalm 9 is an excellent example of city establishment motifs and follows the default template of the genre as discussed previously in chapter 4, although with a slight modification. The context of the Psalm is based on the cause of the thanksgiving of David before the Lord. In verse one, the reader is told, "I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds" (Ps. 9:1). These deeds include the defeat of David's (and Israel's) enemies. The Psalm encapsulates the defeat of the enemies and the exaltation of David's position through the Wisdom City transformation template. The one caveat here is that the circumstances of the scenario are transformed and not David personally. As he explains in his Psalms, David's enemies are turned back by God and come to "everlasting ruins." Likewise, God is commended because "their cities you rooted out" (Ps. 9:6). Unlike his enemies, David is established. The reader is told that by way of contrast to David's enemies, "…the Lord sits enthroned forever" (9:7) and that "The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble." Later, Zion is mentioned as the locus of such presence. Then, the enemies will experience an escalation of defeat. Not only are they defeated, but they ultimately go to Sheol (9:17). In one

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[213] W.H. Bellinger, *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 124.

critical section, the entire political reversal of the Psalm is captured in two verses via the

comparison of two opposing gates.

> Be gracious to me, O LORD!
> > See my affliction from those who hate me,
> > O you who lift me up from the **gates of death**,
> that I may recount all your praises,
> > that in the **gates of the daughter of Zion**
> > I may rejoice in your salvation.[214]

The entirety of this reversal suggests the following use of the "transformation" of the Wisdom

City genre as follows:

I. The city (via David) is threatened by enemies (the simple of the world attacks God's people)
> II. But God is enthroned within Zion (**transformation** of circumstance through divine presence)
III. The enemies of David are defeated (the sophistication of the city is preserved and extended), and David and Zion are established.

This pattern also reflects the "God at the center" motif in Proverbs (18:10) and elsewhere.

God's presence is the transformative element in this entire Psalm. At the end of the Psalm, the

fate of the wicked is described as returning to Sheol. Compared to Proverbs, a remarkable

possibility of interpretation here is that the enemies have either been removed or pushed out of

the city (due to God's presence) and David's reliance on God. This reversal pushes them into

Sheol, which, as argued in Chapter 2, is figuratively present outside the gates of the city where

the robbers and thieves lurk (see Prov. chapter 1).

In Psalm 51, an interesting phrase is introduced, namely "the walls of Jerusalem,"

functioning as a synecdoche for the city and its happenings. This psalm heavily utilizes

penitential themes. It is full of David's recognition of his sinfulness and brokenness before God.

Likewise, it is a prayer of reversal from such malady. In verse 10, David prays, "Create in me a

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[214] Psalm 9:13-14. Emphasis added. Poetic formatting maintained from the text of the ESV.

clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51). David seeks out God for the transformation of forgiveness. As a result of this interaction, David further beseeches God, "Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem…" (Ps. 51:18). Although the transformation taking place is primarily focused on David, the Psalm spills over into the piety, repentance, and transformation of the people as well. In most cases, the reader will see this Psalm as primarily about the individual David. However, the Psalms associates and shows the importance of the salvific transformation of David and others concerning the city's vitality.

Finally, Psalm 72 provides a powerful prayer of political dominion. Perhaps unexpectedly, the focus is not on David but on the very reign of God. Such a reign, as the prayer describes, brings the blessings of God to the people in political form. The pericope begins, "Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!" But quickly, it moves on to supplication for justice for the poor (72:2), a plea for prosperity (72:2), and redemption from the oppressor (72:4)." This is accomplished through the fear of God the nations are called to. The nations are to recognize God so that he might "…have dominion from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8). This final example shows that several of the crucial aims and manifestations of Proverbs (see ch. 3) have significant precedence in the text of Psalms and the life of David.

These Psalms (and others not mentioned) help provide two essential perspectives regarding the Wisdom City hermeneutic. On the one hand, such texts are considered pre-Wisdom City in that they are written before the book of Proverbs and Solomon's mature perspective on polity. They stand more on the side of the mystery or in the era of the development of such concepts. They also provide an insight into some of the foundational elements that ultimately were included in the image of the city in Proverbs and related associations, ideas, and

applications. Solomon internalized various words, concepts, and rhetoric from his father regarding wisdom and city life.

Conclusion

The idea of wisdom, as presented in this chapter, is synonymous with the introductory and early manifestation of the idea. Understanding that the wisdom topic in Scripture has a strong political component helps the reader towards a full canonical understanding of the concept. Moving towards Solomon, the promise and anticipation of wisdom becomes greater and greater. It is clear from the beginning of Genesis onward that wisdom is a complex and significant topic. What many of these biblical examples show, from the time before Solomon, is that God, as part of His redemptive plan for his people, has been seeking to re-establish them in wisdom, especially in concrete form via a Wisdom City in history. This movement in the text accelerates with Solomon, as the next chapter will examine.

CHAPTER 7: THE FULFILLMENT OF WISDOM

As the Wisdom City chiasm indicated, the central material found in Proverbs and the minor wisdom books provides a foundation through which to better understand wisdom material across Scripture, especially its political aspects contributing to an understanding of the godly society. In the previous chapter, the "mystery" of wisdom was introduced, which involved looking backward from the center of wisdom in Proverbs all the way back to Genesis. Now, looking forward, two major portions of Scripture will be examined: (1) the remainder of the Old Testament and (2) the New Testament. Wisdom City themes will be considered in the post-Solomon narrative up until the final pages of the book of Revelation.

The Fulfillment of Wisdom in the Remaining Old Testament

Chapter 6 introduced wisdom (and particularly the relationship to the city) as a mystery to be revealed. With the progression of the narrative of Scripture from Genesis to 1 Kings 10 considered, it is now time to turn to the theme of the fulfillment of wisdom. What is meant by this phrase is that wisdom became fully, albeit imperfectly, manifest in fulfillment of earlier general claims about wisdom and also the wisdom commission from Deuteronomy 4:5-8 in particular. This fulfillment is significant because it involves both the historical *and* archetypal threads of a political reading of wisdom.

On the one hand, as will be discussed below, the historical thread of wisdom becomes especially manifest in the era after David, with the arrival and reign of Solomon. Solomon is a well-known wisdom figure and typifies the fulfillment of wisdom in a comedic denouement (i.e., regarding the resolution or climax of the plot of wisdom). Likewise, the city of Jerusalem, along with united Israel, can be said to be a fulfillment of sorts. Both of these historical facets were seen by the nations as being a blessing to the people of Israel.

On the other hand, the archetypal city also comes into play through the literature of the period. The Solomonic works of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes all contribute to a rich and poetic city-themed discourse built on top of a historical layer. Somewhere in the archetypal city image of Proverbs, at least something of this era of Jerusalem may be intuited along with the very mind of Solomon.

As the sophisticated reader might be thinking by now, the era of Solomon, like that of David, was not perfect. Perhaps the word "fulfillment" is too strong a term? Although there is some merit to this question, the approach of this dissertation is that Proverbs describes wisdom sufficiently as is and was included in the canon as both divinely inspired Scripture and as a practical offering of city and life wisdom for the canonical audience of ages to come. So, the idea of fulfillment here is not alien to the intent of the literature. It is also correct to say that in the remainder of the Old Testament, the thread of the Wisdom City itself flows into the utterly tragic with the problematic later reign of Solomon, divided Israel, and ultimately exile. The wilderness returns.

This section will explore what this initial fulfillment (and loss) of the Wisdom City meant within the context of the remainder of the Old Testament. The importance of this section is two-fold: (1) it will exposit such material, and (2) it will provide the foundation for the next section on the New Testament. What is lacking in the "fulfillment" of the present section will ultimately come into a greater resolution and extension in the New Testament era through the ministry and reign of Christ, and in particular, as it is expressed in the life of the church. The first half of the chapter will examine fulfillment in three sections: (1) Wisdom City in the Former Prophets (from 1 Kings 11:1 to 2 Kings 25:30), (2) The Wisdom City in the Major and Minor Prophets, and (3) The Wisdom City in the Writings (excluding Proverbs and the Minor Wisdom Books).

Wisdom City in the Former Prophets (from 1 Kings 11:1 to 2 Kings 25:30)

The narrative of the Former Prophets has been likened to that of the Gospels. Both groupings of works contain narrative and progression through an episodic structure. Likewise, both present an epic narrative from beginning to end. In the case of the Gospels, this story is centered on the person and work of Jesus, whereas in the Former Prophets, the story is focused on the establishment and travails of the covenant nation of Israel.

Regarding the book of Kings (1 & 2), Leithart points out, "The book of Kings can thus be fruitfully read as wisdom literature, albeit in a rather counterintuitive way."[215] Within these books, what is of particular interest for the present thesis is the life and meaning of Solomon, who represents a zenith in the story of the Former Prophets. "All that glitters is not gold," Shakespeare wrote; such an observation can be usefully applied to the life of King Solomon. McKenzie helpfully outlines Solomon's reign, which exhibits a clear structure that may be diagramed in the following manner:

> A. Transfer and consolidation of the kingdom (1 Kings 1–2)
>   B. Solomon's wisdom (1 Kings 3–4)
>   C. Building and dedication of the temple (1 Kings 5–8)
>   B′. Solomon's wealth (1 Kings 9–10)
> A′. Solomon's apostasy (1 Kings 11)[216]

The narrative of Solomon's life mimics that of Israel. As previously mentioned, Israel's wisdom commission called for the nation to faithfully reflect their commitment to Yahweh through a law-wisdom oriented philosophy of life that would become so significant that the

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[215] Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 19.

[216] Steven L. McKenzie, *Introduction to the Historical Books: Strategies for Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2010), 92.

nations of the region would recognize it. Solomon's life demonstrates the fulfillment of this aim but also, tragically, the loss of that very wisdom.

Solomon was blessed in many ways. He was a great builder. It should come as no surprise that building is paired with wisdom in Solomon's narrative. Wisdom contains this dual sense of both internal and external application, including the craftsmanship needed to accomplish external building. Such an application was previously on display in the construction of the tabernacle. Solomon was given a great population, which was a fulfillment of earlier promises in the Torah. The reader is informed, "Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea." (1 King 4:20). His rule was received across the land of Israel (4:21), food was in abundance (4:22), he possessed a strong military (4:25), and regarding his sophistication as a philosopher, he possessed, "...wisdom and understanding beyond measure and the breadth of mind like the sand on a seashore." (1 King 4:29). Koptak observes and summarizes: "The attribution of the book to Solomon (Prov. 1:1) sends us to the notice in 1 Kings 4:29–34 that he received his wisdom as a gift of God."[217]

Likewise, Solomon's literary output should be connected with the physical success of his kingdom and building projects. It is no coincidence that the accomplishments of Solomon's era are reflected in the sophisticated composition of the book of Proverbs. In this instance, the physical and historical merge into the literary. It can be said that Proverbs reflects a real political situation behind the veil of the text.

The tragedy of Solomon's failure was not caused by wisdom itself, as some have intimated. Biblical wisdom does not manifest a secularity apart from God, nor is it a mere product of human striving; rather, wisdom itself is a gift from God, whether implicitly through

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[217] Koptak, *Proverbs,* 31.

creation or explicitly through revelation to His people. Thus, Solomon's failure must be attributed to a different idea: false theology. The story of the book of 1 Kings really begins with Genesis 1, where the monotheism of the text provides a foundation for understanding the life and reign of Solomon. In other words, Solomon's failure to maintain the wisdom civilization was rooted in his compromise with the polytheism, animism, and pantheism (of the Egyptians), which denied the essential monotheism of Israel's covenant. It was a crisis of presuppositions.

Oswalt helpfully frames the Bible's approach to historical figures, in contrast to much of that in ancient Near Eastern literature, when he states, "Furthermore, the Bible is remarkably frank about its heroes' failures and defeats."[218] As a specific example from the Former Prophets, he adds, "Then there is Solomon, the wisest man on earth, who is foolish enough to enter into a myriad of covenants with pagan wives, necessarily diverting him from covenant loyalty to Yahweh."[219]

The theological fall of Solomon was not an isolated act. It went beyond his individual circumstances and led to the beginning of the end of both unified Israel and ultimately to the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, culminating in the tragedy of 2 Kings 25. Peter Leithart makes an interesting observation regarding the idea of wisdom in the textual space of Kings, "After Solomon, wisdom simply disappears from 1-2 Kings. The words 'wise' or 'wisdom' occur twenty-one times in 1 Kings 1-11, but never again after those chapters. Never again does Israel or Judah have a philosopher-king, a sage on the throne."[220]

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[218] John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths:Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 125.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*, 19

Likewise, the tragedy of Solomon's life and its consequences for Israel is a narrative of the loss of the Wisdom City or wisdom civilization itself. It can be seen in the perverse bookends of the narrative. On the one hand, David takes over and builds up the city of Jerusalem. Solomon, at the height of the city, expands and even builds the temple--a manifestation of the mono-theistic wisdom of the covenant in the heights of the city. But by the end of Kings, those very buildings and the city had been deconstructed/destroyed. The loss of wisdom literally results in the deconstruction of the city--it is creation reversed. The city moves towards the desolate wilderness on the sliding scale of consequences. The narrative of the Former Prophets firmly places such wisdom application in the historical category (whereas, by contrast, Proverbs works in the archetypal/ideal mode). It should come as no surprise that the exposition of the book of Lamentations, as one of the minor wisdom books, combines a lament for the historical and archetypal city of Jerusalem--a poetic and latent result of Solomon's failure.

Wisdom itself seems to be lost in Israel after the time of Solomon and the division of Israel. In exile, even the hope of its return is delayed by the tragic circumstances of covenant failure. Here, the in/out motif reappears. The people, through exile, are again removed from the wisdom city or wisdom civilization. In their rebellion against God, they are separated again from His presence and cast into the political outside, where wisdom is lacking. They again play the simpleton or the fool as it relates to Israel's wisdom commission (Deut. 4).

<center>The Wisdom City in the Major and Minor Prophets</center>

The present section has argued for the theme of Wisdom City fulfillment within the Former Prophets, starting with the reign of Solomon. As has already been alluded to, such a fulfillment fell to the tragedy of post-Solomonic Israel in the divided kingdoms. Such a narrative functions as history but also as background for a major thread in the Old Testament: the

appearance of the prophets. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the prophetic corpus, whether major or minor, would speak to the importance of wisdom and a return to faithfulness in Israel's covenant with Yahweh.

The Wisdom City themes and genre take a particularly interesting turn with the prophets. Although the term Zion is found earlier in Scripture (2 Sam. 5:7)[221], the term is especially present in the prophetic corpus.[222] It occurs a total of 161 times in the Biblical corpus (x157 in the OT, x7 in the NT).[223] In some ways, it is fair to say that Zion is used almost exclusively by the prophets as a major city term. Zion can also be found heavily in the Psalms (a fact which will be examined towards the end of this chapter). Figure 13 shows the distribution of the name 'Zion' throughout the books of the canon.

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[221] "Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David" (2 Sam. 5:7).

[222] Within the historical-critical thread of scholarship, Ollenberger notes, "It is appropriate that discussion of the Zion tradition within Old Testament scholarship is based on the preliminary work of two giants in the field from the past generation, Martin Noth, and Gerhard von Rad." See, Ben C. Ollenberger, *Zion the City of the Great King*, JSTO Press, Sheffield, England, 1987, 15.

[223] Statistics from BibleWorks software version 10.

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
0	0	0	0	0

Joshua	Judges	1st Samuel	2 Samuel	1 Kings	2 Kings
0	0	0	1	1	2

Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel
46	17	0

Hosea	Joel	Amos	Ob.	Jonah	Micah	Nahum	Hab.	Zeph.	Haggai	Zech.	Mal.
0	7	2	2	0	9	0	0	2	0	8	0

Psalms	Job	Proverbs
39	0	0

Ruth	Song	Ecclesiastes	Lamentations	Esther
0	1	0	15	0

Daniel	Ezra	Nehemiah	1st Chron.	2nd Chron.
0	0	0	1	1

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Acts
1	0	0	1	0

Rom	1co	2co	Gal	Eph	Phil	Col	1 Th	2 Th	1 Tim	2 Tim	Titus	Ph
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Heb	James	1 Pt	2 Pt	1 J	2J	3J	Jude	Revelation
1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

Figure 13: Biblical Distribution of the Name 'Zion.'

The exact origin of the term is unknown, as Otto explains, "There is no consensus regarding the etymology of ṣîyôn. Earlier derivations from Elamite or Hurrite are no longer entertained. Derivations from a Hebrew root are problematical because that root can only be deduced."[224]

The reference of the word, like the origin of the term, is difficult. Does Zion refer to a specific part of Jerusalem? Is it synonymous with the entirety of the city? How much this have changed over time? Although various arguments have been put forward as to the exact composition of Jerusalem, it is difficult to find any consensus. Generally speaking, unless context suggests a delimited understanding of the term, it should generally be understood as referencing Jerusalem in its entirety. Ultimately, Zion seems to straddle the lines between the archetypal and historical. Goldingay explains, "But whereas 'Jerusalem' can be used as a down-to-earth geographical term, 'Zion' is always a more dominantly religious or theological term for the place where Yahweh lives."[225] Perhaps this fact may explain why it is difficult to pin down a particular jurisdictional understanding of the term. In Figure 14, the general tendency or mode of each city instance is shown on a continuum.
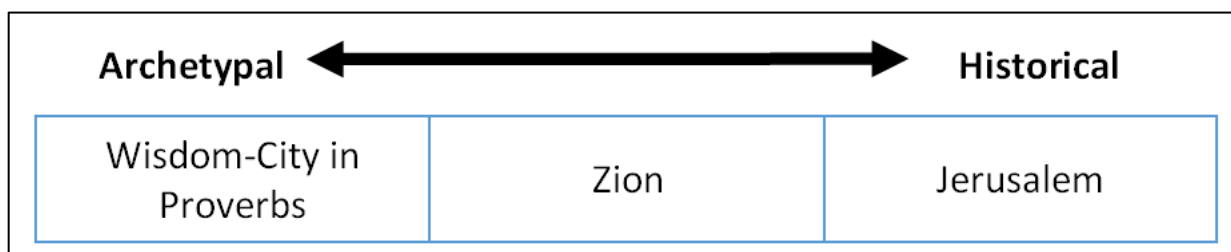

Figure 14: Mode of Meaning for Various City Instances

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[224] Eissfeldt Otto, "צִיּוֹן," ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 342.

[225] John Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 110.

Although the image of the Wisdom City is clearly archetypal and stands in the background of the text, Zion is often used in the foreground to refer to Jerusalem generically, as a people, or as a representative of Judah. Goldingay usefully describes the differentiations of the term:

> In Isaiah, Jerusalem-Zion (like "servant") is a tensive symbol, capable of having more than one referent. It can denote a location, or a physical city, or the people who live in the city, or the corporate personality of the city (we talk in similar terms of London or New York).[226]

In some cases it is merely synonymous with Jerusalem as in Isaiah 40:9:

> Go on up to a high mountain,
>   O Zion, herald of good news;
> lift up your voice with strength,
>   O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
>   lift it up, fear not;
> say to the cities of Judah,
>   "Behold your God!"[227]

Wisdom City Aims & The Prophetic Corpus

The prophetic letters of Scripture represent an extension of Wisdom City themes through echoes, allusions, etc. In order to show the significance of Zion and its relationship to Wisdom City themes, several examples will be briefly examined: (1) Isaiah 2:2-3 and (2) Zechariah 8:3.

First, the well-known pericope from Isaiah 2:2-3 will be considered, which reads:

> It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

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[226] Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah*, 110.

[227] The poetic line structure is maintained from the ESV.

The exact time frame of the 'latter days' differs with various eschatological positions. What is true, regardless, is the importance of this pericope as a historical extension of the foundations and hermeneutical aims of the Wisdom City. Because the city is based in wisdom, "the law, and the word of the Lord" shall go out…. That is, justice and establishment are important characteristics of the city founded in wisdom.

Second, Zion makes an appearance in the minor prophet Zechariah. In one particular prophecy, Zechariah recounts the words of the Lord:

> Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain (Zech. 8:3).

The prophecy here reflects the simple-to-sophisticated reversal generic pattern. In particular, it describes the reversal from being an exilic people to being re-established in the land. As Richard Fuhr and Gary Yates describe, "The community would demonstrate its faithfulness to the Lord by turning from sin and rebuilding the temple. Returning to the land was not enough; more important was their need to return to the Lord."[228] Chapter 8 is largely written from the perspective of promise toward the transformational vision of the restoration of the city. In 8:3, the Wisdom City will become the "faithful city" (עִיר־הָאֱמֶת). Again, this text also conflates the idea of the city with the motif of the mountain. The natural elevation and grandeur of the mountain parallels with the reversal and exaltation of the city due to Yahweh's presence.

What all of these examples have in common is that they use the city ideal of Zion to associate the Wisdom City themes with additional important ideas. Isaiah 2 demonstrates that the

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[228] Richard Fuhr and Gary Yates, *The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 270.

Wisdom City will be used to teach the nations; Zechariah envisions the "faithful city" revivified

in place of the destroyed and ruined Jerusalem.

Although it does not relate to Zion, a final observation can be made regarding the city in

the prophets. An interesting reversal of the entire simple-to-sophisticated Wisdom City genre can

be seen in Isaiah 32. Lester Grabbe has suggested that the wilderness itself can become superior

to the city.[229]

> …until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. And it will hail when the forest falls down, and the city will be utterly laid low (Isa. 32:15-18).

This reversal of the Wisdom City genre, where the wilderness is exalted, represents a form of

hyperbole. The juxtaposition between wisdom and city and its relationship to sophistication,

makes it all the more surprising.[230] It also echoes themes of creation theology (cf. Prov. 8). In the

failure of the city, the goodness and sophistication of God's creation comes through as a

provision.

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[229] See Lester L. Grabbe, "Introduction and Overview," in "Every City Shall Be Forsaken": Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East, ed. Robert D. Haak, vol. 330, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 18–19. Grabbe makes an interesting argument, in contrast to Falk's paradigm and the Wisdom City's bifid approach between being outside or inside the city, when he states, "The biblical story begins in a garden and ends in a city (including Gen. 1–11 which ends with the building and overthrow of Babel). The reversal to an original state of nature is seen positively in Isa. 2 and Hos. 2. A rural utopia is painted in Isa. 32:15–20. The wilderness, scrub land, and fertile land are presented in contrast to the city. This is a scenario very different from the new Jerusalem, showing that the prophets could envision the future in more than one way."

[230] Compare also to the temptation of Christ in the Gospels.

Case Study: Isaiah 35

One of the greatest poems in Scripture and amongst the prophetic corpus is Isaiah 35, a

chapter containing an oracle of salvation expressed via profound symbolism. Because this

pericope demonstrates an example of a generic Wisdom City pattern match *par excellence*, it

will be examined in some detail.[231]

Through elated poetry, Isaiah 35 describes the promise of reversal from Yahweh,

redeeming them from the consequences of their own rebellion and guarding them against

external international threats. Building on this insight, an applicable aim can be added: Isaiah 35

demonstrates the simple-to-sophisticated transformation of the Wisdom City hermeneutic. It

does so using the following hermeneutical template:

> I – The Simple - Israel in the Wilderness
> > II - <transformation>
> II – Sophistication - Israel returns to the City (Zion)

It must also be mentioned that Isaiah 35 comes packaged along with Isaiah 34, a chapter

that focuses on the reversal of the fortunes of Edom, a competitor civilization to Israel. The

interesting juxtaposition here reinforces Wisdom City themes. Namely, through the contrast of

Edom (34) and Israel (35), two transformations are simultaneously happening but in opposite

directions. Edom is returning to the "simplicity" or foolishness of the wilderness, whereas God is

restoring his people to the sophistication of the city (Zion). The table listed below was created to

compare the progression (or digression) of each of the civilizations.

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[231] The information in this section was adapted from material from a research paper by the author of this dissertation from OBST 845 (Prophets II) at Liberty University.

Isaiah 34	Isaiah 35
The nations will be judged (34:1).	The people of God will be redeemed (35:10).
Edom will be destroyed (34:5).	Zion will be established (35:10).
Edom's streams will be ruined (34:9).	Streams will again water the wilderness (35:6).
Predatory animals will dominate Edom's Land (34:11, 14).	Predatory animals will no longer threaten or be present (35:7, 9).
The destruction of Edom and dominance by nature will be "forever" (34:17).	Everlasting joy is the inheritance of God's people in Zion (35:10).

Table 1: Comparison of Progression (or Digression) of Each of the Civilizations

Isaiah 35 begins with keywords that serve as antonyms of city life. These include wilderness (מִדְבָּר), dryness (צִיָּה), and dry land (עֲרָבָה). The context of their use indicates the dire situation of the reader. Not only is Israel in the wilderness, but they are also not in Zion. Like all good poetry, Isaiah speaks on multiple levels. On the one hand, the aim of the chapter is to console those in exile or those who will be in exile in the future. God has not forgotten them. In addition, the symbolic themes of reversal in the pericope speak to many different scenarios. Figuratively, Theodoret of Cyrus summarizes the direness of the chapter when he says, "He calls the wilderness thirsty (35:1) because it had not received the prophetic watering, and a desert (35:1) because it had not been cultivated by God."[232] Various scenarios of plight may be applicable, including (1) an exodus theme (Motyer), (2) a pilgrimage to Zion, as an example of a sort of "eisodus vs. exodus" (Hallvard), and (3) a journey across the historical geographic region of the Dead Sea region to Jerusalem (Watts).

Whatever the malady is, the text provides for a resolution in the transformative center of the text. This can be outlined as follows:

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[232] Robert Louis Wilken, Angela Russell Christman, and Michael J. Hollerich, eds., *Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators, The Church's Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 257.

A Transformation of the Wilderness (1a)
    B Announcement of God's Encouragement to the Weak and Anxious (3-4)
A' Transformation of the Wilderness (The Results of the Promise) (6b)[233]

This "center" mimics some of the other instances of the Wisdom City previously discussed, such as the tower at the center of the city (Prov. 18:10) or the presence of God in the wisdom-constructed tabernacle of Exodus and Numbers. Such an encounter in the center with God is transformative, restoring the path of those who seek God towards the city. Another way to chart out this transformation is to understand the chapter as consisting of two mountain ranges, one natural (in vs. 1-2) and the other with a city (v. 10). The following outline captures the full movement of the chapter:

A The Mountains transform the wilderness by their glory (35:1-2)
    B The people are strengthened by God's promise of salvation (35:3-4)
        C The people are transformed, from lifelessness to life (35:5-7)
    B' The people are protected by God's provision of a highway (35:8-9)
A' The Mountain of Zion manifests as the final destination of God's people (35:10)

The mountain themes are reflective of another poetic section from the prophets, in particular Micah, who states:

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
 to the house of the God of Jacob,
 that he may teach us his ways
 and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; (Mic. 4:2-3 - ESV).

The juxtaposition of the "mountain of the LORD" and Zion provides a parallelism filling in the details of 'mountain' symbolism or theology. Here, the mountains, like the city, are understood

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[233] Wilken, Christman, and Hollerich, eds., *Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators, The Church's Bible*, 9.

as establishments, whether poetic or human-built.[234] The mountain, as a device representing the establishment of God, becomes the center of the redemption of the nations.

Finally, it can be said that as Isaiah 35 progresses, the reader is brought more and more into the urban. Whereas previously wilderness was present, a highway appears (35:8), which is a sign of civilization. Finally, the redeemed are brought to their final destination:

> And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
> and come to Zion with singing;
> everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
> they shall obtain gladness and joy,
> and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Is. 35:10).[235]

The Wisdom City in the Writings

The final survey of Wisdom City ideas manifests in the writings. This can be explored through the remaining two sub-sections: (1) the post-Davidic Psalms and (2) the exilic or post-exilic books in the Writings.

The Wisdom City in the Post-Davidic Psalms

Psalm 127 is noteworthy for a variety of city-related ideas. The title in Hebrew (127:1), "A Song of Ascents; of Solomon," is especially interesting for its connection to the Solomonic literature of the canon. This Psalm provides a poetic commentary, external perspective, and echo of the Wisdom City themes of Proverbs.

The pericope is important because it is one of the texts in Scripture that connects the idea of a house (בַּיִת) with that of a city (עִיר) explicitly:

> Unless the LORD builds the house (בַּיִת),
> those who build it labor in vain.

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[234] It should be noted that mountain symbolism is significantly related to the poetry and descriptions of the city throughout Scripture. This idea will be examined in more detail in the final chapter.

[235] Poetic formatting retained from the ESV text.

> Unless the LORD watches over the city (עִ֭יר),
>> the watchman stays awake in vain (Psalm 127:1 – ESV)

There are two interpretive possibilities. First, the two statements above are given in synonymous parallelism. That is, the house and the city are equated. Second is the possibility of synthetic parallelism. Although house and city here would be considered different items (house = temple, city = the entire jurisdiction including the temple), they nonetheless are caught up in the necessity of recognizing the Lord who "builds" and "watches." If the house and city are distinct, then the house is identified with the temple specifically, and the "city" references Jerusalem. As DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner argue, this idea is entirely possible since the Psalm appears as part of the Psalms of Ascent, presumably in a liturgical context.[236]

This pericope is also interesting as it makes a rare claim that both God and man build the city (although clearly God is given the primacy in building). Nonetheless, it intimates that the building of society can give glory to God as long as the work is not against God but with and for him. This verse also echoes many of the same sentiments from the book of Proverbs, especially the aims and intentions of Proverbs 1-9. Here the theological is especially emphasized. Proverbs reminds that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. Without God, the efforts of building and the condition of the establishment of the city come to naught.

<div align="center">The Wisdom City in the Exilic or Post-exilic Books</div>

In the remaining books of the Writings, the tragedy of the exile begins to be reversed. The restoration, which follows, institutes a new narrative thread that progresses throughout the remainder of the Old Testament and into the New.

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[236] Nancy L. DeClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 918.

Wisdom City themes play an especially important role because the restoration at large is often focused on the restoration of Jerusalem and indirectly on the rediscovery of the Wisdom City of Proverbs (*ad fontes*). To demonstrate the connections between the Wisdom City and post-exilic works in the writings, a one-to-one examination of themes and texts is in order:

Wisdom City Ideal	Book, Echo or Allusion in the post-exilic Writings
(1) establishment of justice, especially for the innocent (1:11)	Ezra the Scribe returns to Jerusalem to teach the Torah (Ezra)
(2) establishment of the city (dwelling vs. dread) (1:33)	The reversal of the destruction of Jerusalem, walls and gates to be rebuilt (Nehemiah, Neh. 1:3).
(3) to walk in the good way of the wisdom city (2:20)	The promise of a better "way" (Mal. 3:1)
(6) the faithful assembly (5:14)	"a very great assembly of men, women, and children…." is reconvened (Ezra 10:1)
(7) the exaltation of the neighbor (the wisdom society) (6:3)	Sharing a vine or fig tree with a neighbor (Zech. 3:10)

Table 2: One-To-One Examination of Themes and Texts

The major thread of the restoration of the Wisdom City can be connected to a famous text, wherein some of the former denizens of Jerusalem lamented during the moment of the reconstruction of the temple:

> And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away (Ezra 3:11-13).

The moment serves as a connective contrast between the goodness of the Wisdom City (as background to the historical Jerusalem) and the present moment of rebuilding. The people of Israel at this time were living the difference of the simple-to-sophisticated trope. The reality of the destruction and rebuilding demonstrates to the reader the abiding importance of wisdom civilization and the reality of how easily it can be lost.

The mixed response by the crowd to the new foundation may be hinted at in the manner of its construction. In Ezra 3:7, the reader is told, "So they gave money to the masons and carpenters…." In the following verses, the reader is told of "workmen" and "builders" who were involved in laying the "foundation of the temple of the Lord." The interesting thing about this section is that it does not contain the grandiose and beautiful connections from previous iterations of the tabernacle or temple. Here, the workers simply build, but wisdom does not seem present. Could the people's response be attributed to the knowledge that even now, in restoration, the rebuilding of the temple and city did not match its former glory due to an absence or scarcity of wisdom as a major monotheistic political philosophy amongst the people?

The Fulfillment of Wisdom in the New Testament

In the previous section, the fulfillment of wisdom came into focus, with an emphasis on the life, teaching, and reign of Solomon. As was emphasized, the zenith of wisdom in his life paradoxically became a turning point of tragedy, introducing the decline of wisdom in Israel. In the restoration after the exile, wisdom returns in part. However, the tragedy of circumstances that began in Solomon's turn from monotheistic wisdom reverberated in the story of Israel and Judah up until Greco-Roman times.

With the advent of the New Testament narrative, two major developments come into play. The first is a reversal of wisdom-related woes in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel, and the second is a greater fulfillment of wisdom, both in understanding and application. The work of salvation wrought by Christ, the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and the emergence of the church take up the narrative of wisdom-fulfillment, which began many years prior. Not only this, but the New Testament also looks forward, casting a

vision of the importance and victory of wisdom which itself is wrapped up in the progression of the kingdom.

In order to exposit the fulfillment of wisdom in the New Testament, this chapter will examine the topic through the three major divisions of the New Testament: (1) the Wisdom City in the Gospels and Acts, (2) the Wisdom City in the Pauline Epistles, and (3) the Wisdom City in the General Epistles.

A Wisdom City Reading of the Gospels

Jesus as the Historical Fulfillment of Wisdom

Systematic theologians often describe Jesus as Priest, Prophet, and King. However, Jesus' role as Sage or as personified wisdom is often overlooked. Although this dissertation's main focus is not on the Gospels, the Wisdom City theme and hermeneutic offered in this paper may, in fact, help aid in a fuller reading of the Gospel. Bartholomew observes:

> As regards the intertextuality between the Old Testament wisdom books and the New Testament, much work remains to be done. Wisdom motifs, for example, play a larger role in Jesus' ministry than is often recognized. For example, he concludes the Sermon on the Mount with the story of two houses (Matt. 7:24–27) with imagery that appears to come directly from Proverbs (9; 12:7; 24:3–4).[237]

As quoted in a previous chapter, Leithart observed that textually speaking, wisdom had fallen out of the narrative of Kings after the life of Solomon. This excellent and correct observation came with a negative conclusion "Never again does Israel or Judah have a philosopher-king, a sage on the throne."[238] Although this is true for the era of the Old Testament,

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[237] Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, 26–27.

[238] Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*, 19

it can be argued that Israel did receive a philosopher-king or sage upon the throne again, namely in the person of King Jesus. The life of Jesus in the Gospels reverses the fall of wisdom in Israel. In the life of Jesus, the story of Israel is recapitulated. Where Israel failed, Jesus did not. It is appropriate that such a reversal would happen, especially in the Gospel of Matthew, which has strong thematic and intertextual connections to the Old Testament. In some ways, Matthew's Gospel acts as a bridge between the Old Testament canon and the remainder of the New. In particular, Matthew reminds his readers regarding the Solomonic recapitulation in the life of Jesus when he claims, "...something greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:42).[239] In addition, Deutsch has made the argument of an intertextual link between lady wisdom and Jesus. In Proverbs 1:20 and 9:5, Lady Wisdom invites the simple to respond. Whereas in Matthew 11:28, Jesus invites his audience: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."[240] The messianic nature of Christ's ministry is also recognized, "And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD" (Isa. 11:2). Thus, not only did royalty return to Israel, but also the rule of wisdom in the incarnation and ministry of Jesus. Such a connection is made explicit at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew in the genealogy, where Christ is connected to the line of King David (1:1) and King Solomon (1:6). He is the continuation of their story.

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[239] Although Beardslee did not see an overtly political form of wisdom in the Gospels, he nonetheless saw wisdom's role significantly as a function of faith which was all encompassing: "The root of this acceptance of the world, in spite of its present evil, lies in Matthew's faith in Christ, which is interpreted in categories drawn from salvation-history and the Law. But such acceptance is mirrored in Matthew's use of the second Wisdom theme: Wisdom toward men. Matthew takes over from the tradition many proverbial expressions of the providence of God in nature...." See William Beardslee. "The Wisdom Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (September 1967): 235.

[240] Celia Deutsch, "Wisdom in Matthew: Transformation of a Symbol," *Novum Testamentum*, Vol 32. Fasc. 1 (January 1990): 37.

The Passion of Christ and the Wisdom City

All of the Gospels contain two major phases of Jesus' ministry: his travels, teaching, preaching, and miracle-working on the one hand and, on the other, his passion. Within his passion, several notable echoes can be read from the book of Proverbs.

One such echo is that Jesus, as incarnate wisdom and one greater than Solomon, acts in a similar role by inviting the city to hear and follow him. This becomes especially manifest when Jesus, paralleling the voice of wisdom in Proverbs 9, invites his disciples to the table for the Passover meal (Matt. 26:18, 26:19, Luke 22:8, 22:15). This event would become the foundation for the sacrament of Christian communion. But much like his counterpart in Proverbs offering the blessings of wisdom, Jesus offers a feast demonstrating the abundance, hospitality, and provision of the kingdom. In this moment the archetypal and historical merge into one.[241] These simple disciples, through Jesus' teaching and wisdom, become sophisticated preachers of the Gospel, as shown especially in the narrative of the book of Acts.

Another interesting fact the Gospels present is that Jesus is crucified *outside* (ἔξω) the city (Matt. 27:33, Mark 15:33, John 19:17-20, Heb. 13:12). The allusion here is to the Wisdom City in Proverbs chapter 1. In that chapter, the ex-urban area and way leading to the city are a place of trouble, where thieves and troublemakers wait for the innocent. Outside of the city, likewise, is the entrance to Sheol itself. By way of contrast, Lady Wisdom stands at the gate of the city crying out to the simple (1:20). In a similar manner, the Gospels demonstrate that Jesus participates in the "drama" of the Wisdom City by being crucified outside the city (for it was not proper for Jesus to be killed within). This exterior location puts him at the heart of the evil that

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[241] The act of building a table or preparing one for a feast can be argued as an essential act of civilization (cf. the Lord's table in the Gospels with the table & feast of wisdom in Proverbs 9).

waits for the people outside of the city of God. In this sense, as Messiah, Jesus confronts the

powers of darkness outside the city to challenge them and overcome them. Jesus literally faces

the dark powers of Sheol, of which the brigands boast: "…like Sheol let us swallow them alive,

and whole, like those who go down to the pit…" (Prov. 1:12).[242] Likewise, Jesus sacrificial act

(Heb. 13:11-14), involves Jesus taking on the sin of the "city" to remove it and defeat death.[243]

Prefiguring the eschatological city where God will redeem his people, John describes the

ultimate future redemption:

> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared
> as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
> "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will
> be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every
> tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor
> crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away (Rev. 21:2-4).

Jesus is the reversal, therefore, of the in/out pattern. Through his salvific work on the cross, he

offers a salvation that draws the Christian back into the presence of God. As Hebrews 10:19-22

describes:

> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of
> Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is,
> through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near
> with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil
> conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

In this midst of God's presence, the redeemed are offered the instruction of wisdom again. God's

work in this reversal helps to reestablish the ideal of the Wisdom City in a decentralized manner

through the life of the church, albeit in a concrete manner.

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[242] In the Gospel of John (14:6), Jesus uses an urban metaphor to describe his role in salvation when he says, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way (ὁδός), and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" Likewise, the early Christian followers in Acts were described as belong to "the Way (ὁδός)" (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, and 24:22).

[243] I am grateful to my dissertation mentor, Dr. Curtis Fitzgerald, for pointing out this connection.

A Wisdom City Reading of Acts and Paul's Epistles

The book of Acts has been rightfully called the sequel to Luke's Gospel. Likewise, it has been described as a bridge between the Gospels and Paul's letters. Not only does it introduce the early church, but it also provides the historical background and context of Paul's letters. Within this important text, Wisdom City themes emerge, which not only echo the wisdom ideas of Proverbs but also present a continuing story and theology of civilization. It can be argued that the Acts of the Apostles is a true "tale of two cities." That is, as many have pointed out, Acts begins in Jerusalem but ends in Rome. It begins with the center of monotheism in the world (Jerusalem) and extends out in confrontation against the paganism and polytheism of the center of the Greco-Roman world.

Of course, there are many other cities in between these two important urban pivots in the narrative. But it should be noted that such a relationship provides the reader with two very important frames for interpreting the text: (1) the symbolism and importance of the two cities and (2) an invitation to explore the "middle" text or the journey in between these two epic urban locales.

The significance of the two cities, in part, relates to their civilizational aspects. That is, Jerusalem focuses on the Jewish civilization, and by way of contrast, Rome represents the stereotypical Greco-Roman center. The contrast between these two competing civilizations makes for a great deal of tension in the middle narrative. Likewise, on the positive side, the narrative tends towards a bifid reading, focusing first on Peter and the early church on the one hand and then Paul and his expansion to the Gentiles on the other.

What is interesting here is that the incipient civilization of Jewish Christianity, which might be called Messianic Judaism or generally Christianity, exploded outward beyond the confines of Israel (at the time occupied by the Romans). This move literally involved the apostle

Paul and others in stepping out upon the roads (ways) of the region to establish Christian churches in homes and various places throughout the empire. Building on previous civilizational categories already introduced, it can be argued that Paul (and others) was actually building Christian civilization by converting or starting over again in each city with a small group of Christians who were to be a continuing witness to Jesus Christ and to sanctify their city or town.

The book of Acts sets the stage for Paul's writings and theology. Paul was a missionary, teacher, and church planter. He was also a tent-maker. Like Jesus, he was a builder. Although making tents was intended to support his missionary efforts, it provides an interesting background to a man whose vision was consumed by expanding and building the church through the provision and calling of God. For the purposes of Wisdom City considerations, the theology of Paul's letter tends to focus on two major relevant ideas: (1) Christ as wisdom incarnate and (2) the building of the church. A theological way of stating this is that Paul had a major emphasis on wisdom-Christology *and* ecclesiology.

Colossians

The book of Colossians contains a great deal of high Christology. In 1:13-20, many scholars argue that Paul has incorporated either a hymn or poem into the text of his work, which describes Christ in exalted terms.[244] Regardless of the source of the pericope, the reader is informed of Jesus:

> [15](ὅς) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
> [16]For(ὅτι) by Him all things were created,
>> both in the heavens and on earth,
>> visible and invisible,
>> whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—
>> all things have been created through Him and for Him.
> [17]He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

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[244] Amidst several rhetorical features, the pericope turns on an intentional use of the Greek relative pronoun ὅς and the particle ὅτι.

¹⁸He is also head <u>of</u> the body, the church; (Col. 1:15-18).²⁴⁵

In this section of the poem, Paul especially focuses on the relationship of Christ to creation, which naturally connects to the wisdom tradition of Scripture. With such a foundation, Paul can go on to argue that the Colossians are well to remain in Christ "…in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2.3). For Paul, the idea is celebratory but also practical, for such knowledge can protect against those who might try to deceive the church.

1st Corinthians

At the start of the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul presents his famous wisdom argument. He does so using satire and wit to make his point that only in Christ is wisdom truly found. This argument is summarized in verse 1:18, where Paul states, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Witherington sees this verse as the first major argument of the book, starting the *Probatio* section (1:18-31).²⁴⁶ Regardless of its place in a potential rhetorical scheme, the pericope in focus is one of the densest argumentations and presentations of wisdom in the New Testament.²⁴⁷ Paul begins his biting tirade against the so-called wisdom of the world through a series of challenging questions: "Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor. 1:20)? The answer that he builds towards is

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²⁴⁵ Formatting retained from material from a research paper by the author of this dissertation from NGRK 505 at Liberty University.

²⁴⁶ Witherington sees the wisdom section of 1:18-31 as an argument building on the thesis of the book (1 Co. 1:10). See Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 106.

²⁴⁷ In some ways, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 stands out in a similar manner to the "love" chapter (13) and the resurrection chapter (15) as memorable.

a direct association of Jesus with wisdom: "And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God…" (1 Cor. 1:30).

The worldly wisdom of the world that Paul speaks of in this section is *not* entirely the same as the wisdom found in Proverbs. Paul's words are offered here as a critique. Wisdom amidst Jews and Greeks functions as a caricature of true wisdom; it is, in fact, mere elitism and worldliness. It is not exalted. In v. 26, Paul even equates such pseudo-wisdom with a worldly political class. Rather, such wisdom is meant to be challenged through what might be called a 'doctrine of nullification':

> For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (1 Co. 1:26-29).

The surprise ending is that real wisdom can still be found and is recommended, but it must be found through Jesus Christ. It was to this message that Paul committed his life and ministry. For Paul, the transformation of salvation reorients the believer. Within this new perspective, he can conclude: "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory" (1 Co. 2:6-7). This line of thinking matches the Wisdom City trope of simple-to-sophisticated, albeit through the lens of Paul's complex and contrarian rhetoric. Paul critiques the "rulers of this age," who should have understood the wisdom of God yet completely missed it. The expectation that the political class should possess wisdom but fails is especially noted.

The Wisdom City in the General Epistles and Revelation

The General Epistles

The general epistles contain multiple references to wisdom and city ideas, offering a useful supplementary contribution to Wisdom City themes in Scripture. This section of Scripture tends towards either practicality or warning to the nascent Christian movement as it began to grow amidst the challenges of the Greco-Roman world.

The first example of such sage advice comes from the book of Hebrews, which, in some ways, offers counter-advice in a spirit similar to that of Ecclesiastes. The book, in general, is presented as a sermon and an example of sophisticated first-century Christian rhetoric. In chapter 11, expositing the life of Abraham, the writer of Hebrews states, "For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10). This statement is useful for several reasons. First, it helps tie Abraham into the story of the Wisdom City. Second, it helps remind that God is very much concerned with the "city" of history or a telos of creation, which also has salvific overtones. That is, the creational and soteriological aims of Scripture are combined in the city designs of God. The main emphasis of the verse is that God is involved with building the great city of history, a theme which will re-emerge in Revelation.

The book of James also speaks significantly of wisdom. Although it was not always appreciated in church history (cf. Luther's opinion of the work as an epistle of straw), it can be said that it offers a substantial addition to New Testament theology, as Crowe comments, "Indeed, much of what we find in the letter of James may be described in terms of the biblical

category of wisdom, broadly understood."[248] In fact, many have considered the work to be the

"Proverbs of the New Testament."

The wisdom focus of the book depends on the structural approach of the interpreter. As

the author of this dissertation has previously argued, the following outline helps make the most

sense of wisdom in the Epistle:

> Thesis: "Steadfastness amidst testing leads to perfection, completeness, and lack of
> nothing" (1:4).
>
>> (1) Supporting Section #1: Wisdom's Provision towards this Goal (to those
>> without Wisdom) – 1:5-7
>>
>> (2) Supporting Section #2: Wisdom's Provision towards this Goal (to those with
>> Wisdom) – 3:13-3:18

The value of this outline is that it builds off the thesis (1:4) and connects the concept of wisdom

(σοφία), forming the major divisions of the book. Around these outline pivots, the remaining

discourses can be arranged according to the double-wisdom structure of the book, which

revolves around the sub-theses in 1:5-8 and 3:13-18. [249]

James' wisdom is very practical, focusing on ethics rather than city life. Nonetheless, in

the same spirit as Lady Wisdom inviting the hearers near the city gates in Proverbs 1:20, the

epistle likewise invites early Christians, regardless of their state of wisdom, to understand the

truth of God in a greater and greater capacity. Although the wisdom of the book is generalized,

without an explicit focus on the political, nonetheless, its implicit political aspect derives from

the fact of the Lordship of Jesus, as observed by Crowe, "The Bible states that the fear of the

Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7), which means that we must recognize God's

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[248] Crowe, *The Message of the General Epistles in the History of Redemption: Wisdom from James, Peter, John, and Jude*, 161.

[249] The information in this paragraph was adapted from material from a research paper by the author of this dissertation from NBST 845 (General Epistles) at Liberty University.

authority over us."[250] The wisdom style of James can be mainly attributed to his imitation of

Jesus' style, as D.A. Carson and Douglas Moo point out:

> A fourth feature of the letter is the degree to which James shares words and ideas with other teachings and works of literature of his day. The most important of these sources is the teaching of Jesus. The degree to which James is permeated by parallels to Jesus' teaching can only be accounted for if James so thoroughly knew that teaching—probably in oral form—that it had molded his own views and attitudes.[251]

The Book of Revelation

It may surprise some readers that the book of Revelation is very much a book of cities. It

is in the book of Revelation where the threads of the historical and archetypal (as introduced

previously) are unified in the ultimate work of God at the end of the age. The significance of

God's work at the end of history involves not only his redemption of individuals but also the

manifestation of the literal Wisdom City, where he will dwell concretely amongst his people,

now made righteous and able to abide in the sophistication of wisdom.

Most readers will strictly associate the book with matters of eschatology and heavenly

conflict. However, the book also contains much prophetic and apocalyptic material. It also

strongly contrasts the two opposing factions in history through the appearance (and symbolism)

of two cities: the city of man and the city of God. The city of man is associated with Babylon the

Great. On the opposite side is the "great city," which Brian Tabb argues is a symbol of God's

rule.[252] He explains, "The Apocalypse concludes with its own tale of two cities—not England

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[250] Crowe, *The Message of the General Epistles in the History of Redemption: Wisdom from James, Peter, John, and Jude*, 158.

[251] D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 629-630.

[252] Tabb's contrast is useful with the understanding that he tends towards an idealist reading of the cities: "Many interpreters have sought to identify 'the great city' as a reference to a particular geographic locale. Dispensationalists and historical critics commonly read 11:8 as a futuristic or historical reference to Jerusalem, respectively. For example, Thomas boldly asserts, 'If language has any meaning at all, it is hard to identify "the great city" as anywhere else but Jerusalem.' He correctly notes that Jerusalem is called 'this great city' once in the

and France but Babylon and the New Jerusalem, which Augustine calls 'the city of this world' and 'the city of God.'"[253]

Conclusion

The fulfillment of wisdom, as described in this chapter, shows the importance of wisdom in the resolution of the scriptural narrative. From Solomon to Jesus, the reader is invited to see the loss and restoration of wisdom. Such a reading is in keeping with a political reading of the wisdom genre, informing the reader of the nature of a godly society.

Old Testament (Jer. 22:8), but the same designation is used for Calah (Gen. 10:12), Gibeon (Josh. 10:2) and Nineveh (Jon. 1:2; 3:2; 4:11). The basic challenge with Thomas's position is that it neatly classifies references to Sodom and Egypt as 'allegory or metaphor' while insisting the immediately following clause ('where also their Lord was crucified') must be a historical location." See Brian J. Tabb, *All Things New: Revelation as Canonical Capstone*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 48, New Studies in Biblical Theology (London; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2019), 165–166.

[253] Ibid., 163.

CHAPTER 8: IMPLICATIONS OF THE WISDOM CITY APPROACH

As argued in this paper, wisdom and city are two fundamental concepts throughout the canon of Scripture. Although each has its meaning, combined, they provide a powerful foundation for a deeper political reading of Scripture. Regarding the city, Grabbe makes an astute observation:

> Cities are part of a 'mental map' created by their inhabitants and others (Nissinen), a part of the 'symbolic geography' of the ancient writers (Carroll). This takes us quickly away from populations and architecture into the deep waters of theology, ideology, anthropology, cosmology, and mythology.[254]

This paper has endeavored to create a Wisdom City map by introducing important terms and patterns throughout the canon of Scripture. In Chapter 2, the image of the city in Proverbs was exposited, with its particular emphasis and importance to the thesis of this paper. In some ways, it can be said that chapter 2 is 'the heart of the heart' of this work. A hermeneutic was introduced based on the inner dynamics of the book of Proverbs and the relationship of the work to the larger corpus of Scripture building on such an idea. Finally, this hermeneutic was applied via a Wisdom City focused reading, starting in Genesis and ending in Revelation.

With all of these previous arguments and expositions presented, this final chapter will provide several concluding observations built around three major areas: (1) implications for the wisdom genre and hermeneutics, (2) an analysis of ancient Near Eastern thought in light of the political themes of the wisdom genre as argued in this paper, and (3) a survey of some possible implications for theology, broadly described.

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[254] Grabbe, "Introduction and Overview," in *Every City Shall Be Forsaken: Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East*, 25–26.

Implications for the Wisdom Genre

Regarding the evangelical approach to exposition, Chou states, "Thus, in the end, the Bible becomes foundational for our hermeneutic."[255] As argued throughout this paper, this is especially true of wisdom.[256] The book of Proverbs, in particular, has come under a central focus due to its contribution to wisdom exposition. It has been said that genre is a contract or covenant between the text and the reader, namely, that it provides helpful signals towards the end of reading. The Wisdom City approach to the genre has contributed to the revision of such signals so that readers can be better equipped when they appear.

With such observations in mind, this section will briefly return to some contemporary wisdom-related scholarship problem areas. The introduction described the genre as being in a state of crisis. Kynes laments, "Starting with the 'presumption' or 'assumption' of a 'subjective nature' that a category primarily composed of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job exists, interpreters find it difficult to identify that 'mysterious ingredient' that holds it together."[257] This paper and section offer the idea that the political facet of wisdom via the Wisdom City motif is the missing piece for which Kynes and others had been searching. The reversal can then be described through several provisions offered in humility due to the complexity of the field.

(1) The political character of wisdom must be included in any consideration of the genre, literature, or tradition.

This dissertation has presented the argument, in detail, that the Wisdom City background image changes the reading of Proverbs to make it centered within the political (not excluding

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[255] Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 14.

[256] Some information in this section was adapted from material from a research paper by the author of this dissertation from BIBL 715 (Hermeneutics) at Liberty University.

[257] Will Kynes, "The 'Wisdom Literature' Category: An Obituary," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 59, no. 1 (2018): 13.

personal ethics or existential insights but grounding them appropriately). This fact essentially contributes to a greater contextual understanding of wisdom. This can be exemplified best if the reader applies a simple formula to each aphorism of Proverbs by adding the phrase, '… in the city' after (or before) most wisdom statements/pericopes. Such an extension helps the reader to overcome the cultural gap and ground the text in its original provenance.

One of the ongoing debates in contemporary scholarship is the question of a dedicated class in Israelite society built around wisdom. Scripture does speak to the role of the sage, as evidenced in Jeremiah 18:18, "Then they said, 'Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.'" Regarding this "office," A. R. Millard states, "The place of the sage, or wise person, in Israelite society is not clear, although some attended kings. Presumably, they were responsible for 'wisdom writings,' which inculcate good and godly behavior in the young…."[258] Although it is difficult to provide a definitive answer to the role of the wisdom sage, a more political reading of wisdom in the Old Testament suggests that a sage class did not monopolize wisdom. Still, wisdom was possessed and preserved by an active political class.

The question of a sage class is not unimportant, as it speaks to the question of the intended audience of wisdom teaching. Who was responsible for handing down wisdom, and to whom? The royal context is often mentioned for such a locus. However, as was previously alluded to in this paper, wisdom does not appear to be the exclusive domain of royalty. Instead, wisdom was a public good in ancient Israel primarily through the canonical import and presence of wisdom. It does not seem monopolized by a specific wisdom class of sages per se (although

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[258] A. R. Millard, "Sages, Schools, Education," ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 704.

scribes and specialists may have been involved with its transmission). Proverbs' references to authority beyond kingship is fundamental (i.e., the wife, the elderly, and the assembly).[259] In the context of the intended canonical reader, it can be said that everyone is a son of Solomon who is encouraged to receive wisdom.[260] Although the implied reader may be considered as a biological son of Solomon, due to the inclusion of Proverbs in the canon, it is better to think of such a reader as the canonical reader. Here, "my son" is a reference to the sons of Israel. The contemporary reader becomes a son of Solomon and is likewise invited to receive his wisdom.

(2) Books in the wisdom genre must be read according to both a horizontal and vertical reading. The horizontal reading (–) involves recognition of the larger narrative within which the wisdom pericope stands. The vertical reading by contrast (|) involves the specific moment, application, or aphorism. Or, to describe the matter differently, the macrostructure should not be neglected in favor of the microstructure. Together, the horizontal (–) and the vertical (|) form a complete reading (+).

A significant example of this paradigm of reading involves the recognition of the previously mentioned wisdom commission (from Deut. 4). An example may be schematized/ outlined as follows:

    <A meta-narrative>
      <B wisdom>
    <A' meta-narrative>

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[259] Koptak argued something very similar: "The instruction of Proverbs 1–9 seems to be directed toward life in general, not life at the court, and only a few sections of Proverbs 10–22 and 25–29 concern kings, and even these may have their origins among everyday people." See Koptak, *Proverbs*, 30.

[260] References in Proverbs to "son" or "sons" can be found in the prologue: 1:8,1:10, 2:1, 3:1, 3:11, 3:21, 4:1, 4:10, 4:20, 5:1, 5:7, 6:1, 6:20, 7:1, 7:24, 8:32

Although not all historical-critical or contemporary critical scholars would completely dismiss the narrative quality of literature, many would downplay such an emphasis. This is partly due to the ideological reading of various modern and postmodern scholars seeking to read wisdom as something other than what it is. On the one hand, a fragmentary approach has been preferred, seeing portions of the text stitched together as part of a grand compilation scheme. Although narrative characteristics may be present, they are generally accidental or secondary due to the redaction process. Second are those who likewise dismiss a narrative reading. They simply deny or strongly dismiss a large enough historical thread that might legitimately account for a narrative reading. Due in part to the political reading of wisdom, as argued in this paper, with its pan-canonical threads, wisdom themes should not be dismissed as disconnected.

(3) Wisdom must be read with narrative qualities, including aphoristic sections.

Aphorisms are a significant part of Scripture and the wisdom corpus. Ryken describes this literary device as "A concise, memorable statement of truth. The Bible is replete with proverbs; they appear on nearly every page."[261] With this definition in mind and building on a horizontal and vertical idea of reading wisdom, it can be said that even the aphorism, in its brevity and terseness, is not an island unto itself but has narrative qualities. This fact is supplied by context. This is the case because when reading individual aphorisms, readers (or listeners) would need to be knowledgeable regarding the hermeneutic contract, i.e., genre, and be involved with understanding the words of each statement. Thus, the answer to the timeless approach of wisdom sayings can be found in the embrace of the concept of embeddedness. In other words,

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[261] Leland Ryken, *A Complete Handbook of Literary Forms in the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 163.

although some sections seem to stand alone, they are, in fact, part of the larger narrative, cemented in the complete canonical story.

Several examples can help manifest this approach. Proverbs 10:25 describes an aphorism with characteristics of a truism and a prophecy. At first glance, it could appear in various peoples' literature. However, it would be improper to read this in a general manner. Instead, it must be read in a Wisdom City context and canonical context. Referencing the wisdom commission here is especially useful. The progression of a narrative frame/reading may look like the following, starting with the Proverb alone:

A "The Righteous are Established Forever" (Prov. 10:25)

Which progresses into a more contextual reading:

A Israel as a Wisdom Nation (Deut. 4:5-6)
      B "The Righteous are Established Forever" (Prov. 10:25)
A' Israel as a Wisdom Nation (Deut. 4:5-6)

The illustration above shows that the text does not speak about any righteous people but God's people, who are called under the wisdom commission of Deuteronomy. To understand what righteousness is necessitates a broader understanding of the text. This can be expanded to the following:

A Israel as a Wisdom Nation (Deut. 4:5-6)
      B In the Wisdom City (Prov. Chs. 1-31)
            C "The Righteous are Established Forever" (Prov. 10:25)
      B' In the Wisdom City (Prov. Chs. 1-31)
A' Israel as a Wisdom Nation (Deut. 4:5-6)

Each of these three variations gives a different reading. First is a nondescript and generic utterance, which can be usefully applied in various circumstances (or improperly out of context). The singularity of the statement makes it especially portable between contexts and in application. Second, the reader is informed that the righteous will be established as God's covenant people, as

described in Deuteronomy. Third, the righteous of the city, based on God's wisdom, will be established as the covenant people. It should be said that this is not a reminder for reading contextually (which is an obvious practice), but rather, that reading wisdom literature specifically in Scripture must be read canonically to clarify the main point of this example. Even though this insight may seem straightforward, it is offered here in a better direction than the skeptical or partitive approaches of contemporary critical scholarship.

A second example from the book of Proverbs comes from 17:17. The text reads, "A friend loves at all times…." There are many applications that can be made with this phrase. It can be applied in many situations. However, examining this proverb within the horizontal/vertical framework is helpful. Such an outline would appear as follows:

> A Israel as a Wisdom Nation (Deut. 4:5-6)
> > B In the Wisdom City (Prov. Chs. 1-31).
> > > C "A friend loves at all times…" (Prov. 17:17).
> > B' In the Wisdom City (Prov. Chs. 1-31).
> A' Israel as a Wisdom Nation (Deut. 4:5-6)

The larger wisdom narrative comes into play to help the reader understand this text more fully. After all, what does friend or love even mean? The Torah helps to explain. There, the reader is told, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5) and from Leviticus, "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" (Lev. 19:18b). The Torah is full of references which help further explicate the idea of love. Likewise, such an exposition is tied to the very visionary purpose of Israel, which, amongst several things, includes the wisdom commission in Deut. 4:5-6. Thus, the more contextual reading of the proverb would be something like "A friend loves at all times in the wise city in its fulfillment of God's national plan for Israel to be a light to the nations."

Implications for Comparative Studies

With the advent of significant textual discoveries in the last two centuries, archaeology and ancient Near Eastern studies exploded with fresh insight. One unintended consequence of the wave of new material was the assertion by various scholars that the Biblical text borrowed or outright copied most of its content from other sources. This trend became so intense that the scholar Samuel Sandmel popularized the term parallelomania to describe the excess of comparison.[262] Regarding wisdom specifically, John Currid stated, "A majority believe that the prevailing direction of influence was from Egypt to Israel, and not vice versa. And thus, when considering Hebrew wisdom literature, they understand it to be largely a product of Egyptian origination and impetus."[263]

Various approaches to parallelomania[264] have been suggested by evangelicals in response to such skepticism regarding the origins of the Biblical text.[265] One such approach is that of Niehaus, who argues for a triadic interpretation of potential parallels.[266] He posits that any

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[262] Sandmel defined the crisis of parallelomania as follows: "We might for our purposes define parallelomania as that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction." See Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (March 1962): 1.

[263] John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 205.

[264] See William D. Barker, "Ugaritic Literature," in *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 121. Barker has coined the term "parallelophobia" to describe the reaction of some in scholarship to avoid parallel relationships at all costs.

[265] See John D. Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 25–26. Not all the higher-critical scholars dismissed Scripture completely. As Currid points out, "Even the notorious higher critic Hermann Gunkel recognized this fact when he commented, 'How incomparably superior the Hebrew legend is to the Babylonian!… And this also we may say that the Babylonian legend strongly impresses us by its barbaric character, whereas the Hebrew legend is far nearer and more human to us.'"

[266] Jeffrey Jay Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 21.

parallel must originate from one of three potential paths: (1) a Biblical origin, (2) a non-Biblical origin (such as Egyptian, Mesopotamian, etc.), or (3) a common source standing behind both. A second approach comes from John Currid, who suggests that although Scripture does contain parallels with other ancient Near Eastern Literature, such material is intentional and provided for what he calls "polemical theology."[267] In addition, this paper will introduce the concept of 'Noahic precedence,' which explains the ultimate source of various ancient Near Eastern tropes as being related to Noah and the immediate successive generations who followed. This notion will be described further and framed in the discussion below. Although this paper is not primarily focused on ancient Near Eastern comparisons, it is helpful to briefly examine the relationship between several pertinent examples and the two significant ideas presented in this dissertation, namely (1) wisdom and (2) the city.

Political Wisdom and ANE Parallels

As Craig Bartholomew cautioned: "While there is undoubtedly a circular hermeneutic operating between ancient Near Eastern studies and Old Testament wisdom studies, it is imperative that the Old Testament wisdom books be studied as literary wholes in order for genuinely comparative work to take place."[268] This advice benefits the present section, where comparing texts can provide valuable insights. This section will briefly examine the book of

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[267] See Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament*, 25. "Polemical theology rejects any encroachment of false gods into orthodox belief; there is an absolute intolerance of polytheism. Polemical theology is monotheistic to the very core." Although one can debate the extent of such polemical parallels, Currid's thesis complements the present dissertations argument. That is, although wisdom material can be found throughout the ancient Near East, the essential monotheism of Biblical wisdom *and* its Wisdom City political context makes it unique.

[268] Craig G. Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson (Apollos, 2016), 22.

Proverbs with *The Instruction of Amenemope*.[269] It is often cited as a parallel to the book of Proverbs due to similarities in wording and phraseology, especially in chapters 22 and 24. It should come as no surprise that specific claims of parallels in Proverbs are a highly debated topic. For the purpose of this brief survey, an examination will be made between the book of Proverbs, representing the biblical wisdom genre, on the one hand, and the overall structure and aim of Amenemope's work.

Amenemope is structured around 30 chapters. In some ways, these divisions are analogous to chapters in Proverbs but tend to be much shorter. The book begins with a preface before delving into the material of chapter 1. In this introduction, several important observations can be made. First, unlike Proverbs, *the Instruction of Amenemope* is written by a scribe or administrator under Pharaoh and not by the King himself. Unlike Proverbs, *the Instruction* is not a composite work but reveals only one author. The preface reveals the context of the work: "the Black Land" or the land of Egypt, along with an introduction to the "islands which appear as a new land," describing the changing nature of the topography of lower Egypt after the annual flooding of the Nile.[270] Egyptian society's polytheism (or implied pantheism) becomes immediately noticeable compared to Proverbs' monotheistic tone. Finally, the preface introduces Amenemope as the author of the work. In terms of architectural and city-style ideas, perhaps the controlling image comes in the description of the "treasure house of life," as described in Chapter 1 (Amenemope 4,1). This abode represents the listener of the text, who can gather together great treasures from listening to Amenemope and collect them in his house.

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[269] Kelly William Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt, An Anthology of Stories, Instructions and Poetry* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 223-243. When quoting *The Instruction of Amenemope*, this paper will reference Simpson's volume.

[270] Ibid., 224.

In addition to this initial treasure house idea, a mention of a "slimy" canal is made (4,12), and chapter 4 mentions a "temple" (6,1). Throughout the text, various physical or architectural details are provided, including an enclosed space (6,1), storerooms (8,7), a "court" (8,11), a "great throne" (19,9), the "street" (24,8), and a "beer hall" (24,21). Amenemope also provides a sort of pantheistic confession, similar to Proverb's monotheistic confession (9:10) when he states, "Every temperate man in the temple says, 'Great is the benevolence of Re'" (7,8-9).

Chapter 30 concludes the entire work, with Amenemope stating, "Mark for yourself these thirty chapters: they please, they instruct…." (27,7-8). It is easy to see why a scholar like Whybray, as discussed in a previous chapter, was interested in casting the book of Proverbs into the form of a work like this due to its aim as a tutorial in wisdom. In summary, what is striking about the book is that it is geared very much towards the ethical, albeit within the philosophical and theological structures of ancient Egypt. The piety of Egyptian religion is strongly felt throughout.

Unlike the book of Proverbs, *The Instruction of Amenemope* does not appear to have a city or political focus. Instead, it centers on wise personal behavior, which brings treasure, whether real or metaphorical, to the student. The work does provide a national context; however, it occasionally refers to the land and various aspects therein. Although there are some similarities in specific wisdom phrases, the overall aims of the books appear very different.

Wisdom City, Mountain City

An additional yet related idea can now be added to the discussion: the relationship between the ideas of city and mountain as found in the broadest context of ancient Near Eastern culture. This section will suggest a somewhat speculative model that is nonetheless rooted in the historical thread of Scripture.

The framework of this model involves the earliest post-flood history of the ancient Near East, starting with Noah and his family. It might be called the Ararat hypothesis. This idea can be summarized by the argument that the foundational ideas present in ancient Near Eastern literature, architecture, politics, and wisdom originated in the experience of Noah and his family in the mountains of Ararat, where they initially settled. This idea builds on Niehaus' triadic hermeneutic by connecting the parallel tree back to the source of the root where no more parallels are possible.

Noah and Ararat

As a northern spectacle over top of the Levant, the mountains of Ararat arguably provided at least part of the deep mythological basis of cities and civilizations as they spread outward both from Noah's time and from the urban disaster of the city and Tower of Babel. Although these mountains are nestled with other mountain ranges, such as the Taurus in Turkey, the Armenian highlands, and the Zagros mountains to the East (in modern Iran), their magnitude and location can perhaps help explain some of the mountain or northern theology and cultural ideas which appear in the literature of various peoples. They might help answer why God is often associated with mountains, temples, the northern direction, and other high places.

The reader needs to go no further than the post-flood account, where Noah and his family had left the ark and began setting up temporary accommodations. In this narrative alone are most of the major themes of ancient Near Eastern thought and literature writ in proto-typical form: an ark structure with an opened ramp (8:13), a theophany on the mountain (9:1), the building and use of an altar (8:20), a promise of favor (8:20), a blessing (9:1), a covenant (9:9), law (against murder) (9:5-6), a family associated with divinity (9:1), and an establishment of such people in a new dwelling (8:21).

Such a foundation would have been remembered by the descendants of Noah, who had begun to branch out from Ararat. Some ideas would have been forgotten, and others exaggerated. As time passed, those humans who did not have faith and allegiance to Yahweh began to recast these proto-cultural experiences into new forms, including deities in their images and/or idols. Old stories about an ark or building in the mountains perhaps would have given way to skepticism, especially if the ark structure was lost through earthquakes, rot, or re-use. Thus, something happened between Ararat and Babel. Whatever it may have looked like, that process involved a devolution of culture, but it had its ultimate source and inspiration from Noah's experience outside the ark.

Ararat Culture

It can be argued that the forms of architecture, literature, and mythology that follow Ararat are connected, even minimally, to Noah.[271] For example, in the pyramids, the ziggurats, and ancient temples of the ancient Near East (and by extension, the pyramids/ziggurats of the Incans, Mayans, and others around the globe), one might find a replay of the drama of Noah and his family before the Lord and the ark immediately after the flood is played out in many variations, some closer yet others further from the original event.

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[271] As an interesting side note, it can be argued there is a contemporary from of 'Ararat' architecture and style in the form of the Art Deco movement, which took many of its visual clues from the ancient Near East. This approach is a fusion of old form and modern themes. If this is true, three stages or types can be summarized: Ararat-I which is represents Noah's proto-cultural civilization (architecture and culture). Ararat-II, or mid-Ararat, which is derivative of Noah in all temple-style cities and buildings in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and throughout the world. Finally, Ararat-III, or late-Ararat style represents the modernization, extension, and exaggeration of such motifs, which is doubly-derived from the previous two stages, along with various Christian motifs.
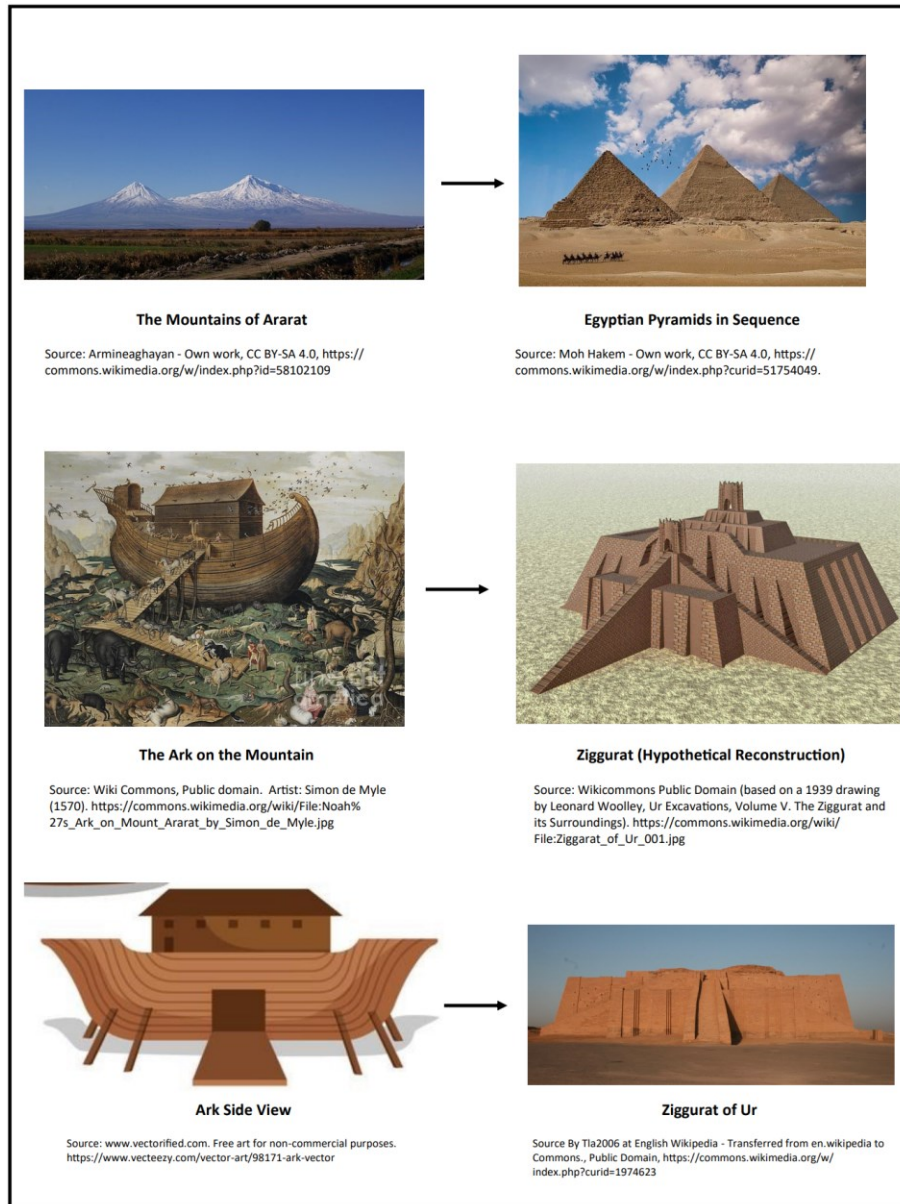
Figure 15: Ararat Hypothesis and Architectural Forms

History shows all these forms involve some connection to divinity, often expressed through a theology of elevation, altars, a sacrificial system, intermediates between God and the world (imitating Noah and his family), and a connection to a city. In Figure 15, some of the general design similarities can be seen between mountain structures, the ark, and various temples.

The first example shown is between the mountain range and the pyramids. Although pyramids are most likely tombs of the pharaohs, the Ararat hypothesis would suggest that they are storied environments, which testify to the supposed divinity of royalty but also replay their return to the mountain(s) of God. One can see the pyramids' highly abstracted and stylish mountains in their imitation of ziggurats and possibly the mountains of Ararat. The pharaohs were not just buried in a pyramid. Instead, they were buried in a mountain (or mountain ranges) in no less of an imitation of the old connected lore of the distant Northern mountains or the abode of God. These pyramids then became, through their collected grandeur, a focal point for the identity of Egypt's cities, people, and civilization—an example of a particular type of architectural synecdoche (the part representing the whole).

The Egyptian style is highly abstracted into geometric forms, unlike the Mesopotamian variations hinting at mountain and ark-like features. As shown in the second and third combination of photos, the painting by the medieval painter Simon de Myle captures three essential aspects of ark lore. First, the ark had some sort of ramp or door which provided access to the ark. Second, the ark was set in the context of mountains, itself perched at a high elevation and thus could be understood as a mountain peak unto itself, and third, the ark possessed some form of outcropped structure on the top, perhaps resembling a house-like structure. Myle's painting is imaginative, but these basic ideas are present in the biblical text's description of the ark. Intriguingly, they match the general architectural functionality of the Ziggurat of Ur, with its mountain-like appearance on an otherwise flat plain, its ramp to provide access, and finally, a top structure distinct from the rest of the building.[272]

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[272] It should be noted the layers of imitation in the buildings of the ancient Near East would generally include: the mountain context itself, the ramp upward to navigate the elevation, and finally the "house" atop the structure. Could these three layers be the source of Art Deco's triadic motifs?

Many of these connections between the Ararat lore and a biblical theology of civilization may imply that civilization can also be defined by its fulfillment of the trope of the mountain city or the mountain range city. The cityscape imitates and becomes a type of the mountain of Ararat, or Noah, or of the place of God's salvation and recreation of the world. For whatever reasons and against all odds, such notions form an artifact in humanity's collective and political memory, and it has persisted in its architecture of old and new alike (see Figure 16).

One of the more comedic interpretations of city and building architecture is the obsession with categorizing structures as phallic. Such interpretations reflect the autonomy of man and a self-centered psychological interpretation of structure. Such a focus is partitive, focusing on one part of the cityscape over and against the rest. In contrast to this view is the theocentric, which provides historical and systematic approaches. That is, tall buildings, churches, spires, and skyscrapers do not form phalluses but rather the peaks of a mountain range stretching across a vast and epic portion of the land. Such distinctions may stand out but point to important emphases within the whole, such as the tower (migdal) or a pastoral place of importance.

Figure 16: Photos: (1) Chicago Cityscape, source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2010-02-19_3000x2000_chicago_skyline.jpg by J. Crocker, (2) Glacier Mountain range source: Wiki Commons. Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=194523

Noahic Culture and the Wisdom City

The Ararat hypothesis is critical, especially as an argument for a potential background that ties together city themes in Scripture with the history of the ancient Near East and has implications for any reading of the Wisdom City. Together, themes of the north, mountains, and the importance of the city as an establishment for the divine come up repeatedly in Scripture.

This section has already mentioned the Northern orientation as a locus or abode of God. However, this theme is present in Scripture with many examples. In the book of Ezekiel, Ezekiel's initial mysterious theophany originates from a Northern "stormy wind" (Ezek. 1:4), which brings with it "a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal" (Ezek.). Judgment often comes from the North, as when God threatens Egypt or Babylon (Jer. 47:2; 50:3). Elsewhere in Ezekiel, various mysterious prophecies regarding those involved in judgment (eschatological?) are described as coming from the "uttermost North" (Ezek. 38:6). Another interesting reference to the direction can be seen in an extended pericope from Isaiah, where a prophecy of judgment is spoken on either Satan (or a ruler in disobedience against God, such as the king of Babylon):

> How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north…" (Isa. 14:12-13).

Job recounts, "Out of the north comes golden splendor; God is clothed with awesome majesty." About creation, he describes God as the one who "…stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing" (Job 26:7). Northerliness even becomes associated with Jerusalem itself, as in Psalm 48, "…beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King" (Ps. 48:2).

The Northern emphasis is only one characteristic of the biblical ancient Near East background. The importance of the mountain is also notable. In two parallel accounts, the importance of the mountain is apparent. First, in the *Enuma Elish* Marduk claims to have defeated the God Tiamat. Matthews and Benjamin describe this event, "After his victory, Marduk stands on her corpse … and then processes triumphantly to the sacred mountain to be proclaimed ruler of the divine assembly."[273] Likewise, the gods of Ugarit contend amidst the mountain:

> They head straight to the Mountain of El.
> They go directly to the divine assembly.[274]

Mountain & theology in these references may have come from that distant memory of the original God-man encounter in the mountains of Ararat, where the proto-assembly of humanity (Noah and his family) was gathered together before God. The Mesopotamians and people of Ugarit no doubt exaggerated and modified such traditions, turning them into a polytheistic version. On the other hand, Scripture introduces a monotheistic claim and argues for continuity with the Noahic tradition. Isaiah famously describes that "…the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains" (Isa. 2:2). This very mountain is identified as a city, for as Isaiah continues, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Is. 2:3b). On the "mountain city" of the Lord, a feast will be given (cf. Prov. Ch. 9):

> On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
> a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
> of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined (Is. 25:6).

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[273] Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East, 4th ed.* (New York; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016), 27.

[274] Ibid., 294. Line formatting maintained.

Likewise, the city will be instrumental in reversing the tragedy of the ages: "And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations" (Isa. 25:7).

Such references help us understand the Wisdom City, as they backport essential ideas via the historical-archetypal chain. In particular, they emphasize a theology of elevation through the literal or figurative use of the mountain and the mountain city (cf. Proverbs 8-9). They make a theological claim that parallels Proverbs, namely that wherever the God of Israel and the church is, there is the highest place, whether in an encounter with Noah at the beginning of the post-flood age or throughout the glories of Jerusalem or in the coming of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ.

Implications for Theology

"The fragmentation of Old Testament wisdom books by historical criticism did not lend itself to rich theological work," observes Bartholomew.[275] This paper has offered a new way forward to consider the significance of wisdom theologically as part of the fourth turn suggested by Bartholomew to reverse this trend. With the Wisdom City motif in mind, several offerings can be made toward understanding the place and potential of such ideas in modern theological, political, and aesthetic thought. These ideas will be presented through the following three sub-sections: (1) Wisdom City themes and systematic theology, (2) Wisdom City themes and political theology, and finally (3) Wisdom City and architecture.[276]

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[275] Craig G. Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson (Apollos, 2016), 13.

[276] Bartholomew adds, "Old Testament wisdom is wonderfully comprehensive in its scope and lends itself to engagement with a range of academic and practical disciplines. An area where signs of this engagement are present is amidst the renaissance of Christian philosophy." See Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, 31.

Wisdom City Themes and Systematic Theology

Systematic Theology generally focuses on several significant topics: creation, the Bible, God, salvation, and last things. Although there are variations to this approach, the political facet of life is typically not given a distinct topic. In traditional theologies, the idea of a city or the city's polity might be appropriately placed under the creation topic since it is an outgrowth of the totality of human vocation and creational possibility. Likewise, wisdom topics may find their way into the topic of God, where wisdom features in the text (Prov. Ch. 8, for example) are correlated with divine characteristics. As Steinmann summarizes, "In Proverbs, wisdom is first and foremost an attribute of God. All true wisdom is godly wisdom, and any wisdom that people possess is a result of his gift of wisdom."[277] This section will focus on possible extensions to systematic outlines potentially moving beyond these already-trodden paths. As Bartholomew put the matter, "Dialogue between Old Testament wisdom and systematic theology has great potential."[278]

The first possible contribution of the Wisdom City to systematics is in the realm of creation theology, where an expansion of the theological presentation can be made to connect vocational and creational teleology. When one considers the goal of creation (within the framework of giving glory to God), an aim or telos should be expected. God did not create humanity without purpose. Instead, he created Adam and Eve and blessed them in the garden towards fruitfulness and governorship over creation. However, the entirety of this goal was not explained in Genesis. The mystery of wisdom was in play here. Humanity needs to seek knowledge to govern creation. This approach manifests a 'gift theology,' wherein the entirety of

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[277] Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 21.

[278] Bartholomew, *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, 30.

the goal of creation is not revealed at once but must be received through an encounter with God and his world. The Wisdom City hermeneutic argues that this ultimate goal is the establishment and functioning of a city, which is defined in the broadest sense. It has been said that war is the cause of the most significant amount of innovation. Better yet, this dissertation maintains that the city's construction, beautification, and sanctification most greatly motivate men and women. Along these lines, there is an opportunity to expand the outlines of systematic theologies on creation, vocation, or polity. These topics might be added to a new category named Mesotology, the study of middle things.[279]

Second, Acrostic and Word Theology. In this instance, it can be said that acrostic theology stands at the foundation of the Wisdom City, primarily through the textual use of acrostics in the text. Acrostic theology implies totality. This totality must be worked out in a myriad of forms. Acrostic theology does not start with the city but with God's creation via the instrumentality of language. The product of such an act is the "worded world," as this author likes to describe it. Biblically, the apostle Paul identifies it as the handiwork of God (ποίημα) in Romans 1:20.

With the creational sense of the acrostic in play, the totalizing movement of language via the alphabet can be applied in various areas. In theology, the acrostic becomes the mother of the canonical and the systematic. Much like the two types of acrostics in Proverbs, the alphabetic and non-alphabetic acrostics (where the lines of the section mirror the Hebrew alphabet without the actual letters), so also systematics and other totalizing disciplines seek to define the A-Z of

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[279] Mesotology is a neologism created (by the author of this dissertation) to describe a possible gap in the order of systematic theology (to this author's knowledge the word is not used elsewhere). Mesotology complements Protology (the study of first things) and Eschatology (the study of last things).

each matter. The canon of Scripture likewise operates according to such principles, providing the beginning, middle, and end of authoritative texts for the church.

The Wisdom City paradigm also benefits from such a perspective and its potential contemporary political application. The Wisdom City is itself an acrostic, providing a totalizing vision of the city as a complete telos of creation structures. Every form and function of its existence is essential, and in love, it is to be carefully created, understood, and refined. Every aspect of life and field of human endeavor involves making a beautiful city, whether it be via material, political, musical, or computer arts. All systematic knowledge becomes manifest in systematic application in the form of the city. The city, therefore, coordinates and necessitates every aspect of life.

<center>Wisdom City Themes and Political Theology</center>

In addition to systematic ideas, the Wisdom City has implications for political theology. Although political theology is not as popular as systematics and not always defined rigorously, the Wisdom City concept can provide an important starting point for a further exposition of the field. Although there are many such possibilities, one extension can provide for a presuppositionalism of polity, which will be briefly examined in this section.

At the heart of the Wisdom City in Proverbs is the tower, which is associated with the name of the Lord. This theocentric architectural feature is ornamented by a variety of divine confessions and recognitions. Needless to say, the Wisdom City is not secular (although it contains creational context). This fact creates an approach in Christian political thought that facilitates comparison and critique of competing political models.

This can be done through comparisons of the foundations of various political systems. For this paper, this can be simplified by comparing several examples. In Figure 18, several

architectures are compared, each with a specific foundation in play. On the left are two non-Christian architectural examples, followed by two Christian examples on the right.

The first photo, a mockup of the never-built Palace of the Soviets, shows the monumental aspirations and architecture of the Soviet Union, a political system based on atheism.
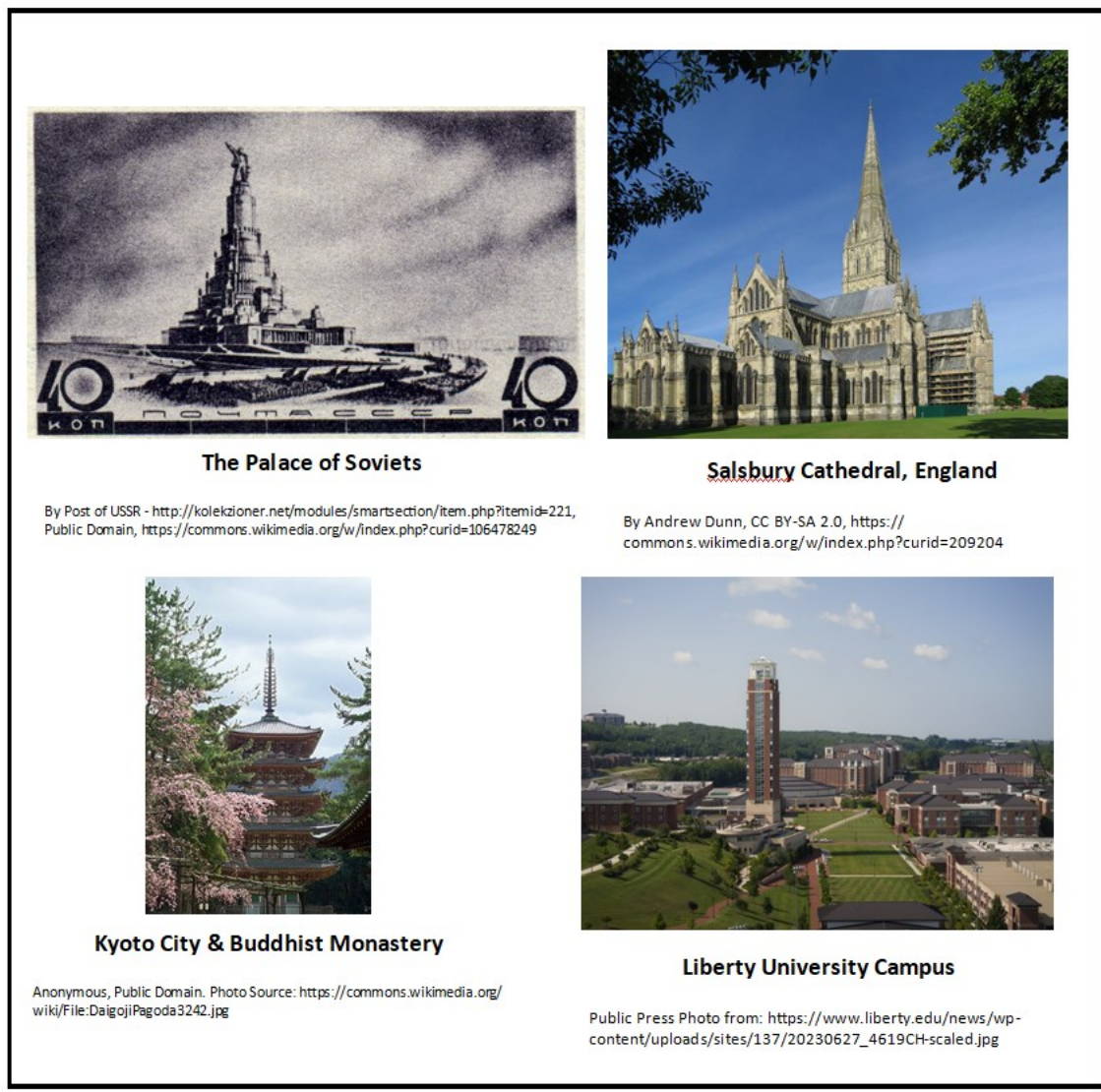

The Palace of Soviets

By Post of USSR - http://kolekzioner.net/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=221, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=106478249

Salsbury Cathedral, England

By Andrew Dunn, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=209204

Kyoto City & Buddhist Monastery

Anonymous, Public Domain. Photo Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DaigojiPagoda3242.jpg

Liberty University Campus

Public Press Photo from: https://www.liberty.edu/news/wp-content/uploads/sites/137/20230627_4619CH-scaled.jpg

Figure 17: Theology and Architecture

Based on the political reading of the wisdom genre, this architecture can be critiqued through comparison. Both the Palace of the Soviets and the Wisdom City are separated and defined from

what is around them, elevating their architectural voice as authoritative. The Soviet building, with its careful approach and walls, leads the viewer to the most crucial component, the representation of man in the form of Lenin atop the entire structure. This is an architectural representation of a man asserting himself as the highest principle of polity, denying God. The Palace of Soviets is an imitation of the Tower of Babel.[280] Soviet architecture, through its monumentality and bold modernism, was meant to stand in stark contrast to what had come before—producing a secular kingdom that ultimately failed. Bulgakov, once a Marxist who turned Orthodox Priest, offered the following critique, "Materialistic economism must logically lead to passive fatalism, because it is not personhood with its creative strivings but rather the impersonal economic process that determines the path of history. Here, there is no place for good and evil or for any ideal values at all."[281] However, consider the wisdom city, by way of contrast, with its carefully defined structure, walls, and outline. Within is the tower which points to the Lord. The comparison of these two images cannot be more different, representing autonomous religion vs. theocentric religion.

Likewise, the second image on the left of Figure 17 shows Kyoto City and the tower of a Buddhist monastery in the background. Again, like the Wisdom City, a prominent tower speaks across the town to inform the citizens and visitors alike what is most important. The presupposition of Buddhist thought literally towers over the city. Buddhist thought, in its pantheistic and desire-denying approach, stands in contrast to the mono-theistic claim of the Wisdom City.

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[280] A related yet trivial point of interest is that the burial place of Lenin is a mausoleum built in the style of the ziggurat of the ancient Near East.

[281] Sergej Nikolaevič Bulgakov, Roberto Jose De La Noval, and David Bentley Hart, *The Sophiology of Death: Essays on Eschatology: Personal, Political, Universal* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), 29.

Finally, the last two examples compare favorably to Wisdom City theology: the Cathedral of Salsbury on the one hand and the Liberty University campus on the other. Each contains a tower that proclaims the most critical foundation of purpose: the theological. The cathedral, with its architecture pointing heavenward towards God and Liberty, and its focus on the divinity school building includes the tower and associated buildings.

<div align="center">The Wisdom City and Architecture</div>

Although the bulk of this paper has been centered on the biblical ideas of wisdom and city, it is helpful to examine how these ideas combine into the fuller picture of biblical theology *and* to examine how they have been applied or might be applied in the future.

The idea that the wisdom city archetype, as presented in Proverbs and echoed throughout Scripture, would itself impact the imagination of the early Church and beyond should come as no surprise. The book of Proverbs itself (along with Lamentations) connects the idea of the acrostic with the political vision of the book to create a deep impulse within Christendom: the systematic builder. Acrostic theology, as previously mentioned, beyond creating the poetic structures of Scripture, trains the mind of the reader to think in whole-part philosophy, which, when applied to the created order, manifests in comprehensive buildings, structures, and cultures that manifest in fullness, often in delightful and unexpected ways. Such creations often stand out to both Christians and non-Christians alike as works of wonder.

One such example is the Hagia Sophia, which is set in the ancient city of Constantinople. The architectural and political vision of Justinian, the church, became a wonder of the world, which he boasted about when he said, "Solomon, I have outdone thee." One medieval

description of the church catches the all-encompassing sense of its design intention: "It is surrounded by walls, as if it were a city."[282]

Thus, Wisdom City architecture suggests some form of being set aside, but what constitutive parts does it suggest? How does it draw together a biblical city aesthetic? It is the suggestion of this paper that the city aesthetic comes together in a similar fashion to the city background matrix introduced in the discussion on the Song of Solomon and Proverbs. That is, any cityscape should (or can) possess the following constitutive elements: (1) the city itself, properly defined, (2) the garden or park within, (3) a tower, landmark, or other monumental aspects pointing to important facets of the city and providing a systematic connective aspect, (4) an external garden to the city, and (5) a wilderness or unkept garden further outside the city. Such categories reflect an acrostic or a-to-z of different built (or unbuilt) spaces and both horizontal and vertical architectural structures.

General Conclusion

An academic slogan of sorts has become popular, describing the arc of Scripture and history, captured here by David Hegeman, which states: "The Bible begins in a garden but ends with a city."[283] This dissertation has attempted to explain this insight by answering the question of how such a transformation comes about with one single concept: wisdom. However, the idea of wisdom in Scripture is not simple. Rather, it must be understood contextually in all its complexity from Genesis to Revelation.

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[282] Nadia Maria El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs, Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs 36* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004), 208.

[283] David Bruce Hegeman, *Plowing in Hope: Toward a Biblical Theology of Culture* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2007), 31.

Along those lines, this paper argued that the wisdom genre must be read politically, providing the reader with an understanding of how the godly society is created and maintained. It is in this reading of the wisdom genre where much of Scripture's political discourse manifests.

As Chapter 1 argued, many readers simplistically approach the book of Proverbs, seeing it merely as a container of aphorisms. By contrast, this dissertation has argued well beyond this position to show the complexity and connectedness of wisdom. Wisdom is not simply a collection of individual gems but jewels crafted into an ornate and valuable crown (context). Wisdom, as described in previous chapters, can rightly be understood as the primary source of political discourse in Scripture. It is the textual architecture of a biblical theology of civilization or even, with some hyperbole, the political science of the Bible.

Not only does this approach to the wisdom genre help the reader of Scripture, but it also connects popular and national culture back to the Bible. Any civilization that will endure needs an internal mechanism to build and rebuild the city (or civilization itself) and to reconcile failings. By way of contrast, Darwinistic mythology, which arguably is the state religion of modern America, lacks a reconciliatory technology, replacing such notions with the competition of the fittest, a war of everyone against everyone, where everyone is doing right in his own eyes (Judg. 21:25). The Wisdom City, as presented in this dissertation, while being a theological city and a monotheistic one at that, is also a city with reconciliation at the center. This is true because of what the name of Yahweh means at the center, represented by the city's tower. The Wisdom City is also the Gospel City.

The need for the Gospel in the story of humanity introduces a limit to the vision of the Wisdom City. Due to man's sinfulness, whether individual or in the aggregate, the Wisdom City is never fully built. This age is adequately described by the two modes of 'now' and 'not yet.'

The tension between these modes manifests in political life as in every other area. Amidst this tension, the church stands as a forge of civilization, a repository of wisdom surrounding the incarnate wisdom who is Jesus Christ. This can also be seen between the goodness of the church (the not-fully-yet) versus that of non-Christian civilization (the now).

Amidst this positive vision of the Wisdom Commission from Deuteronomy and the competition to such wisdom present in the world, a question arises: Why build the city? Why should the reader of Proverbs, the Christian, or anyone interested in political ideals care about such things? The answer can be given through a slogan introduced by Martin Luther, who reportedly said, "Even if I knew the world would end tomorrow, I would plant the apple tree today." This slogan can be reworked slightly into the present context: "Even if we knew the world would end tomorrow, we must still build the city today." The Christian, then, in divine imitation, is the city builder of history who must, in the love of God, partake in the work of creation *and* redemption in history.

The reader of Proverbs is commended for appreciating and applying the wisdom of the city image in its pages. As argued previously, this image is a significant foundation for reading the political themes found elsewhere in Scripture and helps the reader to create, understand, and participate in a godly society.

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