

**THE RHETORIC OF THE FATHER:
A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FATHER/SON
LECTURES IN PROVERBS 1-9**

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

Proverbs 1-9 contains 10 instructions/lectures in which a "father" addresses his "son(s)." These lectures are in many respects similar. They address a "son" or "sons," urge the son(s) to listen, not forget or guard the father's teaching, and affirm the value of this teaching. However, a curious diversity (which scholars have yet to explain adequately) exists within these lectures. Despite their similarities, the appeals and the argumentation of the lectures reflect differences in the father's rhetorical objectives and strategies.

This dissertation uses rhetorical criticism to address the diversity within these ten lectures. Analysis of the artistic proofs (logos, pathos, and ethos) of each lecture reveals that the ten lectures may be classified into three groups or subsets on the basis of their rhetoric: 1) calls to apprenticeship (1:8-19, 2:1-22, 4:1-9, 4:10-19), 2) calls to remember and obey (3:1-12, 3:21-35, 4:20-27), and 3) warnings against illicit sexual relations (5:1-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27). Further, although the lectures of each subset possess common features that distinguish them as a group, each lecture also possesses unique features that distinguish it from other group members. One may conclude that Proverbs 1-9 contain three distinct subsets of lectures with diverse members, ten lectures with ten different rhetorical strategies. Put simply, the ten lectures are a remarkable rhetorical anthology.

Scholars generally have assumed that these speeches were written, collected, and edited to address important issues in the life of the community. This dissertation proposes another option, namely, rhetorical education. The ten lectures provide rhetorical models for different needs or situations. This hypothesis is congruent with long standing theories regarding the composition of Proverbs 1-9 (the lectures are the original core of these chapters) and the purpose of this composition (youth education). The ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9 not only demonstrate the presence of formal rhetorical interests in ancient Israel, but these lectures formed a book devised, in part, to serve the purposes of rhetorical education.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
ANET	J.B. Pritchard (ed.), <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient and Altes Testament
ATAbh	Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AV	English Authorized Version (King James)
AzTh	Arbeiten zur Theologie
BAGD	W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> .
BDB	F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BHS	<i>Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BN	Biblische Notizen
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>

BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Monograph -- Monograph Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament
DSB	Daily Study Bible
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. E. Kautzsch, trans. A.E. Cowley
HAR	Hebrew Annual Review
HS	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JB	<i>Jerusalem Bible</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>

JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament - Supplement Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KB	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, <i>Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros</i>
KBW	Zentrales Komitee des Kommunistischen Bundes Westdeutschland
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LD	Lectio divina
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Massoretic Text
NCB	New Century Bible
NIB	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NIV	New International Version
NJV	New Jewish Version (<i>Tanakh</i> , 1985)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OLP	Orientalia lovaniensia periodica
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library

<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
REB	Revised English Bible
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>SBFLA</i>	<i>Studii Biblici Franciscani liber annus</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature - Dissertation Series
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature - Writings from the Ancient World
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
TynOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten and Neuen Testament
<i>ZAH</i>	<i>Zeitschrift fur Althebraistik</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift fur Theologie und Kirche</i>

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs 1-9 as Rhetoric

Proverbs 1-9 is composed, almost exclusively, of speeches. Following a brief introduction (1:1-7), these chapters consist of ten lectures by a "father" to his "son(s)." The delimitation of these lectures is debated, but may tentatively be defined as 1:8-19, 2:1-22, 3:1-12, 3:21-35, 4:1-9, 4:10-19, 4:20-27, 5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27. Interspersed within these lectures are five interludes (1:20-33, 3:13-20, 6:1-19, 8:1-36, and 9:1-18),¹ three of which are speeches by woman wisdom.² Further, four of the ten father/son lectures cite speeches made by other persons or groups.³

Proverbs 1-9, however, is not only composed of speeches; these speeches express vital concern for persuasive speech, i.e., rhetoric. On the one hand, each of the ten father/son lectures attempts to persuade the reader to accept the father's counsel and to pursue wisdom (e.g., 1:8, 4:10-11, 7:1-4).⁴ To this end, the father/rhetor employs diverse rhetorical devices and strategies. On the other hand, the lectures

¹ The terminology of "lectures" and "interludes" is adopted from Michael Fox ("Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," JBL 116 [1997], 613-619).

² 1:20-33, 8:1-36, 9:1-12 (expanded by the speech of woman folly in vv. 13-18).

³ The speech of the sinners (1:10-14), the speech of the father's father (4:3-9), the speech of the foolish son (5:12-14), and the speech of the adulteress (7:10-21).

⁴ See also 2:1-11, 3:1-2, 3:21-23, 4:1-2, 4:20-22, 5:1-2, 6:20-22.

caution the reader about the seductive rhetoric of the opposition. This warning occurs in five of the ten father/son lectures (e.g., 5:3, 6::3-24, 7:13,21).⁵ So, interest in rhetoric, both that of the father and the opposition, abounds in the ten lectures.

Several scholars (e.g., Aletti, Yee, Newsom, and Crenshaw; see below) have noted the rhetorical nature and concern of Proverbs 1-9. There is, however, a lacuna in present research. Although Proverbs 1-9 contains ten lectures, a sustained analysis of these lectures as lectures, i.e., as rhetoric, does not exist. This dissertation seeks to fill this lacuna by offering a fresh investigation of the ten father/son lectures from the perspective of rhetorical criticism. More specifically, rhetorical analysis of the lectures offers two types of contributions to present scholarship.

First, rhetorical analysis will contribute a new perspective and, thus, new insights on old interpretive problems in the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9. Several interpretive cruxes continue to plague the study of these texts, e.g., the delimitation of the lectures, the identity of the strange/foreign woman, the presence of textual allusions, and the relationship denoted by the vocative בְּנִי ("my son"). Rhetorical analysis will offer fresh testimony on these and other issues that may break present the scholarly impasses. In addition, this dissertation will consider the rhetorical implications of these interpretive problems and their proposed solutions.

Second and more significant, a rhetorical analysis that focuses on how each of the ten lectures attempts to persuade its audience promises to uncover new data about the ten lectures and the practice of rhetoric in ancient Israel. For example, rhetorical

⁵ See also 1:10-19 and 2:16.

analysis will reveal that there are three types of lectures in Proverbs 1-9 (calls to apprenticeship, calls to remember and obey, and warnings against illicit sexual relations) and that the individual members of each subset employ different rhetorical strategies. The implications of this finding may seem minimal, but, in fact, they reach from revisions in our understanding of the lectures and the purpose of this collection to the existence of self-conscious rhetorical reflection and, perhaps, rhetorical education in ancient Israel.

Such rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures requires two preliminary steps. First, it will be helpful to situate this dissertation within the history of scholarship on Proverbs 1-9. Biblical criticism is a methodological jungle in which theoretical vines are intricately interwoven and often intergrown. Any attempt to untangle a singly pure methodological vine is impossible and detrimental to both the strength of the web and the individual method. Therefore, in the remainder of this chapter, I will define the relationship of my rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures to the existing interpretive web of Proverbs 1-9. Second, the ambiguity of the term "rhetorical criticism" demands clarification. While pursuit of one method alone is impossible, the lack of methodological clarity and delimitation threatens confusion and dilution of focus. Thus, in the second chapter I will define my rhetorical method and distinguish my practice from other similarly titled methods. These first two chapters will be followed by a sustained rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures. A summary and synthesis of the contributions of this study, as well as proposals for further investigation, will comprise the final chapter.

The Interpretive Web: Research on Proverbs 1-9

Scholars writing in the twentieth century have attempted to understand four features of Proverbs 1-9: its forms, the source(s) of its traditions, its striking references to women, and literary concerns (e.g., unity and style). It is beyond the limits of this study to present an exhaustive summary of this secondary literature.⁶ This survey is limited to studies that provide significant stimuli or contributions to the rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures. My goal is to situate this study within the existing interpretive web of Proverbs 1-9. To this end, the four traditional categories of study plus the recent emergence of rhetorical interest in Proverbs 1-9 provide the framework for this discussion.⁷

Form-Critical Studies

Several scholars have utilized form-critical methodology to interpret Proverbs 1-9 within its ancient Near Eastern (especially Egyptian) setting.⁸ The most significant

⁶ For a more comprehensive history of research, see Bernhard Lang, *Die Weisheitliche Lehrrede. Eine Untersuchung von Sprüche 1-7*, SBS, vol. 54 (Stuttgart: KBW, 1972), 11.26; C. Westermann, *Forschungsgeschichte zur Weisheitsliteratur 1950-1990*, AzTh, vol. 71 (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1991); and Roger N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

⁷ Admittedly, some studies may be placed in multiple categories, e.g., I will discuss Christi Maier's monograph (*Die 'Fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9: Eine Exegetische and Sozialgeschichtliche Studie*, OBO, vol. 144 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995]) under both Tradition History and The Women of Proverbs 1-9. The use of these five categories is simply a heuristic device for presenting diverse material.

⁸ Christa Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9: Eine form- und motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter Einbeziehung ägyptischen Vergleichsmaterials*, WMANT, vol. 22 (Netherlands: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1966); Franz-Josef Steiert, *Die Weisheit Israels: ein Fremdkörper im Alten Testament? Eine Untersuchung zum Buch der Sprüche auf dem Hintergrund der ägyptischen Weisheitslehren* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1990).

of these studies for rhetorical criticism are the works of Roger N. Whybray and William McKane. Although Whybray's initial work preceded McKane's commentary on Proverbs by several years, it is advantageous to begin with McKane's research because his work established the foundation on which Whybray constructs his arguments.

McKane's chief contribution to the study of Proverbs 1-9 is his clear distinction between the instruction genre and the sentence literature.⁹ Prior to McKane's commentary, many scholars argued that the longer instructions had evolved from the sentence literature and, therefore, Proverbs 1-9 belonged to the latest stage of the development of the book of Proverbs.¹⁰ According to McKane, the discovery of comparative wisdom texts has overturned this form-critical consensus. These ancient Near Eastern wisdom texts demonstrate that the longer units of Proverbs 1-9 are not the result of formal evolution from the sentence literature, but an adaptation of an international genre of instruction.

McKane established his thesis by extensive study of both Egyptian and Babylonian-Assyrian instructions.¹¹ He documented the existence of an international genre "with definable formal characteristics which can be described in syntactical "

⁹ William McKane, *Proverbs*, OTL (London: SCM Press, 1970).

¹⁰ For example, J. Schmidt, *Studien zur Stilistik der alttestamentlichen Spruchliteratur*, ATAbh 13/1, Munster: Aschendorfsche Verlag, 1936; Walther Zimmerli, "Concerning the Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," trans. Brian W. Kovacs, in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw (New York: KTAV, 1976), 175-207.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 51-182.

terms.”¹² For example, the instruction form utilizes the imperative to exhort and gives reasons why its commands should be obeyed, typically contained in subordinate clauses (e.g., motive clauses with "for/because" as well as final and consecutive clauses). McKane then demonstrated a formal correspondence between this international instruction genre and texts in Proverbs. He concluded

that the formal structure of 1-9, 22.17-24.22 and 31.1-9 is that of an international Instruction genre, and that it is not the consequence of a process of form-critical evolution involving the agglomeration of wisdom sentences. The Instruction is a separate genre from the wisdom sentence and the form-critical argument for the lateness of these sections of the book of Proverbs, involving as it does the assumption that their basic formal unit is the wisdom sentence, falls to the ground.¹³

McKane's form-critical conclusion that the lectures represent a distinct genre, rather than accumulated growth rings around a core sentence, provides a fundamental starting point for this dissertation. He has established that the lectures (instructions) are discrete compositions with characteristic features, and thus opened the way for studies of the lectures as a discrete group or genre. My rhetorical analysis will build on his conclusions in an attempt to understand further these texts as rhetorical compositions.

In 1965, five years before McKane's commentary was published, Whybray offered a monographic study of Proverbs 1-9 titled *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept*

¹² Ibid., 6.

¹³ Ibid., 7. McKane further proposes (8-10) that the Instruction form was appropriated by Israel during the reign of Solomon to serve the educational needs of government officials. The Instruction form established itself in Israel during this period and was adapted over time for a more broadly based educational function. See a critique of this proposal by Scott L. Harris, *Proverbs 1-9: A Study of Inner-Biblical Interpretation*, SBLDS, vol. 150 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 26-35.

of *Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9*.¹⁴ This monograph provided a literary-historical investigation into the evidence for the development of the idea of wisdom in ancient Israel. Although Whybray's primary focus was the nature and purpose of the personification of wisdom in 1:20-33, 8:1-35, and 9:1-6, his investigation included brief consideration of the ten lectures.

Since his initial study, Whybray has offered numerous essays and monographs that have strengthened and/or modified his original views.¹⁵ These studies offer four fundamental insights or points of departure for my rhetorical analysis of the lectures. First, study of formal features reveals the presence of ten "discourses" or lectures in Proverbs 1-9.¹⁶ While the use of form-critical methodology in the interpretation of Proverbs 1-9 and initial impetus for identifying lectures in these chapters came from others,¹⁷ Whybray was the first to apply the form-critical method consistently and identify ten instructions/lectures. The key feature that led him to this conclusion was the characteristic introductory formula. According to Whybray, each of the lectures:

¹⁴ Roger N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9*, SBT, vol. 45 (Chatham, Great Britain: SCM Press, 1965).

¹⁵ Roger N. Whybray, "Some Literary Problems in Proverbs 1-9," *VT* 16 (1966): 482-96; *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, JSOTSup, vol. 99 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994); "City Life in Proverbs 1-9," in *"Jedes Ding Has Seine Zeit" Studien zur Israelitischen and Altorientalischen Weisheit*, ed. Arija A. Diesel, Reinhard G. Lehmann, Eckart Otto and Andreas Wagner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 243-50.

¹⁶ Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 33-37.

¹⁷ Whybray acknowledges his dependence on F. Delitzsch (*Das Salomische Spruchbuch* [Leipzig: Dorffling and Franke, 1873]) who distinguished 15 "Spruchrede" and G. Wildeboer (*Die Spruche*, K.HC [Leipzig, 1897]) who identified 7 "Abschnitte."

1) appeals to "my son," 2) commands the son to listen, 3) asserts the personal authority of the teacher, 4) asserts or implies the value of the teacher's words, 5) makes no reference to any authority other than that of the teacher, and 6) denotes human wisdom when referring to "wisdom."¹⁸ Since its publication, Whybray's form-critical identification of ten lectures has stood without serious challenge. This dissertation accepts and builds on this consensus.

Second, according to Whybray, the lectures of Proverbs 1-9 were developed and first used in educational settings. He, like McKane, identified the educational *Sitz im Leben* of the lectures by demonstrating a relationship between the lectures (instructions) of Proverbs 1-9 and Egyptian wisdom instructions, which he thought were clearly associated with education. Initially, Whybray suggested that Israel's sages borrowed and adapted foreign wisdom traditions.¹⁹ More recently, he has asserted a parallel development between Israel and other ancient Near Eastern wisdom traditions, rather than one of direct influence.²⁰ Nonetheless, this link or parallel development enabled Whybray to place the ten lectures in their "proper" *Sitz im Leben*, namely

¹⁸ Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 34-35.

¹⁹ Ibid., 35-37.

²⁰ Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 12-13, note 4.

youth education,²¹ despite almost complete silence in the rest of the Old Testament regarding such education.²²

Third, Whybray supplements his form-critical conclusions with redaction-critical arguments claiming that the wisdom poems (1:20-33, 3:13-20, 8:1-36), the prologue (1:1-7), the epilogue (9:1-12), and the didactic collection of 6:1-19 are secondary additions to the lectures.²³ According to Whybray, the original core of Proverbs 1-9 was the ten lectures.²⁴ This conclusion about the compositional history of Proverbs 1-9 led him to consider further the *Sitz im Leben* of the collection of

²¹ Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 16.

²² The lack of decisive evidence about education in ancient Israel in the Old Testament has resulted in an on-going debate regarding the specifics of the educational setting of Proverbs 1-9 identified by Whybray. For example, whereas the use of the instruction form suggests a *Sitz im Leben* among a group aware of international traditions, namely the royal scribal school, the content of the instructions in Proverbs 1-9 does not reflect royal or scribal concerns. Presently, this debate revolves around three potential contexts for education: 1) the tribe, or family, 2) the royal-court, or 3) a "private" school (see Whybray's summary in *The Book of Proverbs*, 18-25). This dissertation tentatively adopts the third hypothesis, namely, the *Sitz im Leben* of lectures was some type of educational setting outside the immediate family and royal-court.

G.I. Davies ("Were there schools in ancient Israel?" in *Wisdom in ancient Israel. Essays in honour of J.A. Emerton*, ed. John Day, Robert P. Gordon, and H.G.M. Williamson [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 199-211) has persuasively presented the evidence for the existence of schools in ancient Israel. 1) Although explicit evidence from the Old Testament itself is minimal (e.g., II Kgs 6:1, Prov 4:7, 5:13, 13:14, 15:7, 17:16, 23:23, Isa 8:5-6, 14, 16), it does establish the existence of schools in ancient Israel. 2) Persuasive indirect arguments may be made from the analogy of other ancient Near Eastern scribal schools and the scholastic character of certain biblical books, chiefly the wisdom books. Davies also offers valuable reviews of the contributions of A. Lemaire (*Les Ecoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'ancien Israel*, OBO 39 [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981]) and D.W. Jamieson-Drake (*Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archaeological Approach*, JSOTSup 109 [1991]).

²³ Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 72-74; and *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 29-56. See also Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," 613-619.

²⁴ Other scholars, e.g., Michael Fox ("Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," 613-619), have confirmed this aspect of Whybray's redaction history.

lectures. Initially, he claimed that the ten discourses originally formed an independent “handbook of instruction designed for use in school.”²⁵ More recently, while affirming the educational nature of the lectures, he has argued against their collective existence in the form of a teacher's manual or a student's handbook because of the redundancy of the discourses and the lack of any clear redactional plan.²⁶ I will return to this point at the conclusion of this dissertation.

Fourth, in another redactional hypothesis based on form critical analysis, Whybray maintains that the original form of the discourses was short (5-12 couplets). For example, he edits the ninth lecture from 33 cola (6:20-35, MT) to 13 original cola (6:20-22, 24-25, 32), and possibly only 8 (6:20-21, 24-25).²⁷ He reduces the rhetorical variety of the lectures to a common original form. According to Whybray, this original form was expanded by two levels of additions: 1) additions that enhanced the authority of the teacher by identifying his teaching with a more than human “wisdom,” and 2) theological additions that identified “wisdom” as an attribute of Yahweh.

²⁵ Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 51.

²⁶ Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 27-28, 34, 57. His denial hinges on his hypothesis regarding the literary history of the ten lectures. The sporadic and uneven nature of the additions to the lectures, as identified by Whybray, lead him to conclude that the additions were made to the individual lectures before their redaction into Proverbs 1-9 (*The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 59). If his reconstruction of the literary history fails, so does his denial of a pre-existent collection of lectures.

²⁷ Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 48-49.

Whybray's complex proposals about the literary history of the lectures has suffered critique from a variety of perspectives.²⁸ My rhetorical analysis will also dispute his claims. I will demonstrate that this hypothetical literary history ignores rhetorical features that attest to the integrity of the lectures as presented in Proverbs 1-9 (MT). In this vein, my analysis follows Muilenburg's ' critique of the excesses of form criticism: "there has been a proclivity among scholars in recent years to lay such stress upon the typical and representative that the individual, personal, and unique features of the particular pericope are all but lost to view."²⁹

My rhetorical analysis, then, will challenge some of Whybray's form-critical/redactional conclusions. Nonetheless, the form-critical conclusions of Whybray and McKane are the foundation of the rhetorical analysis presented in this study. Although my rhetorical practice differs from that of Muilenburg (see chp. 2), his assessment of the relationship between form criticism and rhetorical criticism accurately describes my work: "In a word, then, we affirm the necessity of form

²⁸ On the matter of Yahwistic reinterpretation (espoused by Whybray and McKane), see Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 60.68; Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom and Yahwism," in *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of John L. McKenzie*, ed. J. Flanagan, and A. Robinson (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 117-26; Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom Theses and Hypothesis," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel J. Terrien*, ed. John G. Gammie, Walter A. Brueggemann, W. Lee Humphreys and James M. Ward (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 40-41; M.L. Barre, "The 'Fear of God' and the World View of Wisdom," *BTB* 11 (1981): 41-43; Frederick Wilson, "Sacred and Profane? The Yahwistic Redaction of Proverbs Reconsidered," in *The Listening Heart*, ed. K.A. Hoglund (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 319-20.

²⁹ James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 53.

criticism, but we also lay claim to the legitimacy of what we have called rhetorical criticism.”³⁰

Traditio-Historical Studies

Apart from, but closely related to, form-critical studies, several scholars have pursued what they call the "tradition history" of Proverbs 1-9. Put simply, does Proverbs 1-9 originate from, depend on, or allude to Israelite religious traditions or foreign traditions?³¹ The form of the question suggests the two common tradition-historical proposals. On the one hand, numerous scholars have attributed not only the form but the basic content of Proverbs 1-9 to foreign, especially Egyptian, tradition. Israelite influence is acknowledged, but regarded as secondary.³² On the other hand, some scholars place Proverbs 1-9 more directly within Israelite traditions.³³ For example, from what source did the author of the lectures take his terminology (e.g., "hear," "do not forget")? Whybray asserts that this terminology was derived from foreign wisdom instructions: "while there may be biblical reminiscences in a few cases, the parallels with Amen-em-opet are in general much closer than the biblical

³⁰ Ibid., 18.

³¹ For many scholars working with Proverbs 1-9 (e.g., Harris and Maier, see below) "traditio-historical" study includes the identification of citations or allusions from other texts and "inter-textual" play. Thus, my survey broadens the definition of "traditio-historical criticism" to accommodate these scholars.

³² The earlier position of Whybray in *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 33-37.

³³ A. Robert, "Les Attaches Litteraires Bibliques de Prov. I-IX," *RB* 43 (1934): 42-68, 172-204, 374-84; 44 (1935): 344-65, 502-25; Steiert, *Die Weisheit Israels*, 211-308; the later position of Whybray in *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 159-62; Scott L. Harris, *Proverbs 1-9*; Maier, *Die fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*.

parallels.”³⁴ Against this, Robert argues that this terminology was taken from biblical sources, especially Deuteronomy.³⁵ The resolution of this complex traditio-historical debate falls outside the boundaries of this survey. If accepted, however, the theses of some recent traditio-historical investigations do make limited contributions to our understanding of the rhetoric of the lectures.

The first lecture (1:8-19) is a good example of the potential significance of traditio-historical or inter-textual links for rhetorical criticism. Scott Harris argues that this lecture plays upon portions of the Joseph novella of Genesis.³⁶ He establishes this connection by: 1) utilizing the argument of Sternberg and Bakhtin that direct discourse may represent another discourse by means of selected words and phrases, and 2) noting the shared lexical features of Proverbs 1:8-19 and Genesis 37.³⁷ According to Harris, these shared lexical features include nine words or phrases:

1. **בוא**: "do not go" (Prov 1:10) // "and he (Joseph) went" (Gen 37:14)
2. **הלך**: "come with us" (Prov 1:11) // "come now" (Gen 37:20)
3. **דם**: "blood" (Prov 1:11, 16, 18) // "blood" (Gen 37:22, 26, 31)
4. **ירד**: "as those going down (to the pit)" (Prov 1:12) // "I will go down (to Sheol)" (Gen 37:35)
5. **רע**: "for evil" (Prov 1:16) // "evil (beast)" (Gen 37:20)
6. **שפך דם**: "to shed blood" (Prov 1:16) // "shed no blood" (Gen 37:22)
7. **ארחות**: "paths" and "ways" (Prov 1:19) // "caravans" (Gen 37:25)

³⁴ Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 37.

³⁵ Robert, "Les Attaches Littéraires Bibliques de Prov. I-IX," 43:43-44.

³⁶ Harris, *Proverbs* 1-9, 33-65.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 52-61.

8. **בצע**+ **דם**: "ill-gotten gain" and "blood" (Prov 1:19) // "ill-gotten gain" and "blood" (Gen 37:26)
9. **נפש**: "life" (Prov 1:19) // "life" (Gen 37:21)³⁸

The theory of Bakhtin and Sternberg, coupled with the shared expressions of Proverbs 1:8-19 and Genesis 37, lead Harris to identify Proverbs 1:8-19 as an "inner-biblical interpretation" of Genesis 37. He concludes that,

The backward glance at events from the Joseph story serves the dual purpose of fixing the parent's discourse in the realm of scriptural tradition (i.e., Torah) while at the same time providing an authoritative platform for the future oriented nature of his/her discourse (i.e., Proverbs).³⁹

In rhetorical terms, the traditio-historical or inter-textual links to Genesis establish the ethos (i.e., credibility or authority) of the father/rhetor.

The acceptance or rejection of Harris' conclusion of the "inner-biblical interpretation" of Genesis 37 in Proverbs 1:8-19 depends on one's acceptance of Bakhtin's hypothesis about the referential and representational characteristics of double-voiced discourse and Sternberg's claim that direct speech presupposes an original utterance that serves as a point of orientation for understanding the speech.⁴⁰ Here, I accept the possibility that Genesis 37 may serve as an object of orientation for the direct speech of Proverbs 1:8-19, and thus may be of rhetorical significance to the ethos of the speaker. However, I question the conclusiveness of shared lexical features which only include common words that occur throughout the Hebrew Bible.

³⁸ Ibid., 52-54.

³⁹ Ibid., 60.

⁴⁰ See Harris' discussion of Bakhtin and Sternberg (ibid., 46-52).

Similarly, Christi Maier observes numerous anthological references (*anthologischen Bezugnahmen*) in Proverbs 1-9 to other biblical books, especially deuteronomistic texts. For example, according to Maier, the *Grundtext* of the second lecture (2:1-4, 9-20) takes up the deuteronomistic concern for "forgetting the covenant" (2:17) found in Jeremiah 3:21, 13:25, 50:5, and Deuteronomy 4:23, 31, while the later additions to this *Grundtext* (2:5-8, 21-22) reflect the deuteronomistic land theology (2:21-22). The speech of the adulteress in 7:14 (the tenth lecture), is formulated on the basis of late priestly traditions. And, according to Maier, the ninth lecture (6:20-35) is a midrashic interpretation of the decalogue and Deuteronomy 6:6-9.⁴¹

For Maier, these anthological references prove that Proverbs 1-9 is a scribal work that could only have been cultivated by people in well educated upper class circles who were familiar with the written religious traditions of Israel. This conclusion leads to a second, namely, that Proverbs 1-9 was composed after the written fixation of the decalogue and deuteronomistic texts. Consequently, Maier asserts a late post-exilic date for the composition of Proverbs 1-9.

Although she does not consider the rhetorical function of "anthological references," Maier's observations, if accepted, are rhetorically significant. First, like Harris, the literary links to the deuteronomistic literature help establish the ethos of the rhetor. The father's rhetorical authority is not merely positional (relative to the son) or based on his status (an acknowledged sage), but rooted in the religious traditions of the community. Second, Maier discloses a major source of the rhetorical topoi found

⁴¹ Maier, *Die 'fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*, 92-102, 145-166, 185-194, 262.

in the lectures, namely the written religious traditions of Israel (esp. Deuteronomy and Jeremiah).

Again, the ambiguities and complexities of the tradition history of Proverb 1-9 require separate study. My rhetorical analysis, however, will incorporate the tradition-historical, anthological, or inter-textual links proposed by Harris, Maier, Robert, et al., insofar as these links impact the rhetoric of the lectures, e.g., the development of the speaker's ethos and the utilization of accepted traditions to establish the speaker's proposition.

Studies of the Women in Proverbs 1-9

Three women or groups of women are present in Proverbs 1-9: woman wisdom (in the lectures and interludes), the strange/foreign woman (in the lectures only), and woman folly (in the final interlude only). These women have been the focus of extensive scholarly attention, especially in recent years.⁴²

Numerous studies have focused on woman wisdom in Proverbs 1-9.⁴³ Four of the five interludes present a highly developed personification of wisdom. In the first interlude (1:20-33), wisdom appears as a female prophet. The second interlude (3:13-

⁴² Because woman folly is not present in the lectures, studies of this figure are omitted in this survey.

⁴³ G. Bostrom, *Proverbiastudien: Die Weisheit and das Fremde Weib in Spr 1-9* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1935); Claudia Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Bible and Literature Series, vol. 11 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985); Bernhard Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim Press., 1986); Camilla Burns, "The Heroine with a Thousand Faces: Woman Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," Ph.D. diss. (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, 1990); Maier, *Die fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*; Gerlinde Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1-9*, FAT 16 (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996).

20) contains a hymn that praises woman wisdom for her value to humans (3:13-18). The most developed personification occurs in the fourth interlude (8:1-36). Here, woman wisdom asserts her familial relationship to God and her existence prior to creation. In the last interlude. (9:1-18), woman wisdom makes a final appeal to the simple (9:4-6) and offers advice to the teacher (9:7-12).

In comparison to the personification of wisdom in the interludes, Fox observes that the personification of wisdom in the lectures "is found in incidental or inchoate form."⁴⁴ Seven lectures refer to חֵכְמָה or חָכְמָה however, only two of these are clear instances of personification: 1) in 4:5-9, wisdom is depicted as a woman the son should prize, embrace, and never forsake; and 2) in 7:4, the son is advised to make wisdom his bride.⁴⁵ Consequently, studies of the personification of wisdom focus on the interludes rather than the lectures and, thus, are of minimal benefit to my rhetorical analysis of the lectures.

One investigation of woman wisdom that is helpful for the study of the lectures is the work of Gerlinde Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1-9*. In addition to her primary analysis of the personification of wisdom in the I-speeches of the interludes, Baumann also investigates the other occurrences of חֵכְמָה and חָכְמָה in Proverbs 1-9. She endeavors to understand the meaning of wisdom in these texts and

⁴⁴ Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," 618.

⁴⁵ Elsewhere in the lectures, חֵכְמָה is associated with other abstract terms (2:1-6, 10) or simply denotes the content of the fathers teaching (4:11, 5:1). חָכְמָה is used to refer to "the wise" who will inherit honor (3:35), and to warn the son of the danger of being "wise" in his own eyes (3:7). See Whybray's analysis (*The Book of Proverbs*, 71) and the summary by Baumann (*Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1-9*, 249-51).

its relationship to wisdom in the I-speeches: "Is a personification of חֵכְמָה also presented here, or is the word to be understood in another way?"⁴⁶ Further, what is the relationship of wisdom to Yahweh outside the I-speeches: "Was it [the relationship to Yahweh] carried out boldly or concretely as in the I-speeches, or is it perhaps stressed differently?"⁴⁷

Baumann's research leads her to classify the occurrences of "wisdom" outside the I-speeches in three categories: 1) clear personification (lectures: 4:6,8ff., 7:4; interludes: 3:16ff., 9:11), 2) uncertain personification (lectures: 2:1f, 4-10, 4:5, 7; interludes: 3:13-15), and 3) non-personification (lectures 4:10-13, 5:1f; interludes: 1:2-7, 9:10).⁴⁸ This schema, and especially the study upon which it is built, provides valuable insights into the rhetorical function and meaning of wisdom in the lectures.

The strange/foreign woman (אִשָּׁה זָרָה and נִכְרִיָּה) appears in four lectures (2:16-19, 5:1-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27).⁴⁹ While the identity of this alien woman has been the subject of numerous studies, her identity has been most recently and fully explored by Christi Maier.⁵⁰ While I have already noted Maier's concern for traditio-

⁴⁶ Ibid., 224. My translation of: "Liegt auch hier eine personifizierende Verwendung von חֵכְמָה vor, oder ist das Wort in anderer Weise zu verstehen?"

⁴⁷ Ibid. My translation of: "Wird es starker ausgeführt oder konkretisiert als in den Ich-Reden, oder ist es vielleicht anders akzentuiert?"

⁴⁸ Ibid., 249.

⁴⁹ The alien woman also appears to be the basis from which woman folly has been developed in the final interlude (9:13-18).

⁵⁰ See the history of research presented by Maier, *Die 'fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9, 7-19*.

historical issues (see above), the identity of the alien woman is also of crucial significance to Maier's broader investigation of the social-historical matrix of Proverbs 1-9.

Through careful exegesis of the four lectures in which the alien woman appears, Maier maintains that this woman is a literary figure who represents the various life situations of real women and their positions in the late post-exilic society of the Persian period.⁵¹ Specifically, she identifies three literary-rhetorical roles played by the alien woman. First, the alien woman is a type of the adulteress. Thus, the rhetorical concern of Proverbs 1-9 is not mixed marriage or cultic infidelity but the adulteress as an "outsider" within the community.⁵² Second, the alien woman is a contrasting figure to woman wisdom. In this respect, the alien woman is described in both immanent terms reflective of the real life situations of women, and in transcendent or symbolic terms. This use of metaphor combines symbolic and real life.⁵³ Third, the alien woman is a parallel figure to the wicked men (cf. 1:10b-14 and 7:14-20). She, like the men, is a social outsider who threatens communal norms and well-being.⁵⁴ According to Maier, the forcefulness and the repetition of the warnings against the alien woman demonstrate the relevance of the (real) problem(s) caused by her. Whereas historical concerns are secondary to my study, Maier's insights provide

⁵¹ Ibid., 253, 264-68.

⁵² Ibid., 254-55.

⁵³ Ibid., 256-58.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 258-59.

significant data for understanding the rhetorical situations and problems confronted in the lectures.

Thus, to recapitulate, while recent scholars have made significant contributions to our understanding of the historical, social, and theological dimensions of the women in Proverbs 1-9, most of these studies, due to the nature of the text and the specific foci of the scholars, are of tertiary concern to rhetorical analysis of the lectures. There are, however, two notable exceptions. First, because Baumann includes the lectures in her investigation of the personification of wisdom in Proverbs 1-9, she touches on an important issue for this study, namely, the meaning and significance of wisdom in the lectures. Second, because the alien woman is a feature of the lectures, Maier's investigation of this woman's literary-rhetorical roles is of great interest to this study. Consequently, my analysis will glean important insights from both Baumann and Maier as I consider the rhetorical function of wisdom and the alien woman in the lectures.

Literary Critical Studies

Many scholars consider literary analysis and rhetorical criticism to be synonymous. Indeed, some rhetorical methods are indistinguishable from literary criticism and, by any definition, literary and rhetorical analysis are closely allied. Both offer synchronic analysis of the present text (MT), and both practice "close" reading. The primary difference between my practice of rhetorical analysis and literary study is my concentrated focus on suasion and the use of conceptual terminology from classical Western rhetorical theory as a heuristic device for

understanding the text (see chp. 2). However, because these differences are mitigated by similar interests, various literary analyses of Proverbs 1-9 are of special interest and benefit to this study.

Bernhard Lang was the first to contribute a monograph that focused exclusively on the ten lectures: *Die Weisheitliche Lehrrede. Eine Untersuchung von Sprüche 1-7*.⁵⁵ In this study, Lang utilized literary-critical methodology in order to establish the date (pre-exilic) and social setting (family education) of the lectures: He also explored three *exegetische Grundfragen* in the lectures: 1) the relationship of action and consequence (7:1-7, 1:15-19); 2) their teaching about piety (3:21-26, 2:1-11, 3:32-35) and religion (3:5-12); and 3) their teaching about the foreign woman (2:16-19, 5:1-14, 6:20-35, 7:1-27).

In this survey, the results of Lang's exegesis are of secondary interest to the method he espouses. The conclusions of McKane, Whybray, et al., regarding the influence of Egyptian wisdom on Proverbs 1-9 (see above), are of fundamental importance to Lang. However, Lang contends, beyond these scholars, that not only is the individual instruction form in Proverbs 1-9 similar to the Egyptian instruction form, but the collection of Proverbs 1-9 as a whole is similar to Egyptian instruction texts or collections.⁵⁶ Proverbs 1-9, like its Egyptian counterparts, is a loose,

⁵⁵ Lang has published numerous other works on Proverbs 1-9 and related topics: *Frau Weisheit* (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1975); "Schule und Unterricht im Alten Israel," BETL 51 (1979): 186-201; "Klugheit als Ethos und Weisheit als Beruf: Zur Lebenslehre im Alten Testament," in *Weisheit. Archäologie der Literarischen Kommunikation III*, ed. Aleida Assman (Munich, 1991), 177-92; *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs*; "Figure Ancienne, Figure Nouvelle de la Sagesse en Pr 1 A 9," LD 160 (1995): 61-97.

⁵⁶ Lang, *Die Weisheitliche Lehrrede*, 100.

unorganized collection of school literature that lacks any plan, unity, or content development. Based on this observation, Lang vindicates his isolation of the ten lectures for study outside the literary context of Proverbs 1-9.⁵⁷ In other words, because of the *kompilatorische Charakter* of the collection, any attempt to study the lectures as integral parts of a unified composition is futile.

Lang's extreme conclusion about the literary fragmentation of Proverbs 1-9 has been challenged by other critics (e.g., Burns and Overland; see below). Rhetorical analysis of the lectures may also modify Lang's claim by contributing to our understanding of the redactional strategy of the editor[s]. Nonetheless, an approach similar to Lang's is adopted in this study. Here, because of their common features (form) and their foundational role in the development of Proverbs 1-9,⁵⁸ the lectures are isolated from the interludes for independent exegesis. This segregation is more of a heuristic device than a commentary on the literary unity of Proverbs 1-9. This move is designed to provide clearer insight into the common and unique rhetorical features of the lectures, insights which may contribute to our understanding of the unity of Proverbs 1-9.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 28-29, 100.

⁵⁸ See Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9, 613-633.

Against Lang, Camilla Burns' chief concern is the literary unity of Proverbs 1-9. In order to demonstrate this unity, Burns utilizes stylistic analysis⁵⁹ and the Hero Journey as described by Joseph Campbell.⁶⁰ She argues that,

personified wisdom or the Wisdom Woman is a mythic symbol of the heroine who makes the archetypal journey and also issues an invitation to others to follow the journey of wisdom. The elements of the journey which fit into the pattern of the monomyth give a new means of expressing the unity of Prov 1-9.⁶¹

According to Burns, two fundamental facts support her reading: 1) woman wisdom is a mythic figure, and 2) the journey (way) is a dominant theme in Proverbs 1-9.⁶²

Paul Overland, like Burns, also pursues a literary interest in the unity or "cohesiveness" of Proverbs 1-9, although he does so by employing the methods of

⁵⁹ Burns' "stylistic analysis" ("The Heroine with a Thousand Faces," 36-44) is an amalgam of James Muilenburg's rhetorical method and the poetics of Robert Alter.

⁶⁰ Burns, "The Heroine with a Thousand Faces," 4-6.

⁶¹ Ibid., 6.

⁶² Ibid., 7. See also, Norman C. Habel, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," *Int* 26 (1972): 131-57.

Burns provides a unique literary perspective on Proverbs 1-9. Her analysis, however, is of limited benefit for rhetorical study of the ten lectures. Burns' interpretive concern is for woman wisdom and her literary role in unifying Proverbs 1-9. As stated above, the personification of wisdom is primarily a feature of the interludes, not the lectures. Burns also favors a thematic division of the material based on the schematics of Joseph Campbell's Hero Journey rather than division based on formal or rhetorical criteria. For example, she outlines 1:8-2:22 (94-114) in the following way:

Separation:

The Call to Adventure (1:8-19, 20-33; 2:1-4)

Supernatural Aid (2:5-11)

The Crossing of the First Threshold (2:12-22)

This division unites the first lecture (1:8-19), the first interlude (1:20-33), and the proposition of the second lecture (2:1-4), while dividing the second lecture (2:1-22). Thus, her literary analysis pursues different interests and proceeds in a different direction than this dissertation.

New Criticism and Structuralism.⁶³ Overland is primarily concerned to identify literary devices responsible for the framing and coherence of the text, and to demonstrate how selected "units inter-connect to form a unified text."⁶⁴ He achieves this goal by establishing a catalog of macro- and micro-structural devices that occur in Proverbs 1-9,⁶⁵ and offering meticulous analysis of five texts (1:1-7, 1:8-19, 1:20-33, 2:1-22, 3:13-26).

⁶³ Paul B. Overland, "Literary Structure in Proverbs 1-9," Ph.D. diss. (Brandeis University, 1988), 45.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 44-45.

⁶⁵ Overland (Ibid., 71-97) identifies numerous macro-structural framing and coherence devices. Macro-structural framing devices include: opening devices (the vocative **בְּנִי**, dual-theme verses, repetition, and dense clustering of key terms), closing devices (use of **כֵּן**, character summaries, dense repetition of key terms, chiasm, and climatic text-terminal usage of **כֹּל**), and opening & closing devices (inclusio & palistrophe, and transitional devices). Macro-structural coherence devices include dynamic ("a series of words or ideas which form a logical progression," 85) and metaphoric devices ("words which are related but which do not indicate any progression," 85).

He also identifies several micro-structural framing and coherence devices (98-140). Micro-structural framing devices include: opening devices (introductory dual-theme verses and line-initial lexical markers [e.g., **עַד־מָתִי**, **הֵנָּה**, **גַּם**, **אִז**, **כִּי**, **תַּחַת**, and non-consecutive r-v]), closing devices (climatic use of **כֹּל**, dual-theme verse conclusion, hendiadys that produces a climax, rhetorical questions, line-initial **עַל כֵּן**, and various combinations of formal features and content that create a sense of conclusion), and opening & closing devices (palistrophes, inclusios [based on related terms, line-extremities, synonymous word pairs, assonance, and repeated terms], and transitions [repetition of key terms, dual-theme verse transitions, antecedent referents, repetition of content, development of content, and use of allusion]). Micro-structural coherence devices include: dynamic coherence devices (imperative + motive, series of terms that denote various progressions [e.g., passivity to activity, intensification, general to specific, tangible to intangible], the law of increasing members, accusation + reform, form based transpositions, directional motion, dynamic reversals, chronological organization, description + implication), and metaphoric coherence devices (antithetical word pairs, grammatical unity of person, affirmative/negative patterning, repetition of terms or related terms, grammatical unity of tense, patterning of imperatives, jussives and rhetorical questions, and assonance).

Overland's work offers two contributions to the rhetorical analysis of the lectures. First, many of the structural devices that Overland identifies in Proverbs 1-9 also function as rhetorical devices.⁶⁶ Indeed, Overland acknowledges this connection.

Inquiry concerning rhetoric can be instructive since it may be able to explain why certain structures were employed. Did elaborate structures serve simply to adorn the composition, or did they contain an inherent power to nuance transmission of the message in a predictable manner? In order to discern whether a structure may have impelled a pupil toward a persuasive goal, various aspects about the structure may be considered. Does it escalate or diminish the sense of tension in the text? Does it advance the argument significantly? Is it instrumental for introducing a key thought into the discourse? While this last concept (introduction of a major thought) appears purely stylistic, it may contain rhetorical ramifications when the persuasive effectiveness of a composition depends on the addition of a new thought.⁶⁷

Despite this acute insight, Overland's rhetorical observations are minimal and only offered in support of his avowed purpose, namely, explaining the function of some structural features in Proverbs 1-9. Nonetheless, his connection of structure and rhetoric is noteworthy. This study will draw from Overland's observations, but reverse the dominant concern from structure to rhetoric and expand this focus to all ten lectures.

Overland's second contribution to the rhetorical analysis of the lectures is his selection of two lectures (1:8-19 and 2:1-22) and part of a third (3:21-26) for in-depth structural analysis. These analyses will be consulted in the rhetorical exegeses of these texts. Here, his selections warrant two observations. First, from a rhetorical

⁶⁶ For example, the dense clustering of key terms in the closing verse of a textual unit, character summaries, and the climatic text-terminal use of כֵּן are rhetorical devices for persuasive conclusion.

⁶⁷ Overland, "Literary Structure in Proverbs 1-9," 145-46.

point of view, Overland's selection of texts is objectionable. Although his criteria for selection includes "the need for variety,"⁶⁸ he fails to discern the rhetorical variety in the lectures. Consequently his selection of texts includes two rhetorically similar lectures and no representative from other rhetorical types (see chp. 3). Second, Overland's delimitation of 3:13-26 as a textual unit is problematic. Although he uses form-critical arguments to disassociate 1:7 from 1:8-19, he rejects the same form-critical arguments to unite 3:13-26.⁶⁹ Here, he combines a hymn to wisdom (3:13-18), a theological appendix to the hymn (3:19-20), and the proposition of the fourth lecture (3:21-26, while excising the body of this lecture [3:27-35]), into "an entire text."⁷⁰ This irregular use of form criticism denotes a weakness in Overland's method, namely, the danger of inconsistently applying "certain criteria for recognizing unity and division."⁷¹ More specifically, microscopic attention to structural detail may fail to see the independence of larger literary or rhetorical units. Despite these objections, the detail of Overland's structural analysis of the text and the breadth of his catalog of structural (rhetorical) devices makes his study an valuable aid for any serious literary or rhetorical study of Proverbs 1-9.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁶⁹ Overland (ibid., 105) identifies 1:7 as the final verse of the unit 1:2-6 for three reasons: 1) the line-initial **שֶׁמֶע בְּנִי** in 1:8 denotes a new unit, 2) the shift from the indicative mood in verse 7 to the imperative in verse 8, and 3) verses 8-9 fit together as an imperative followed by a **כִּי** explanatory clause. All of these observations are also true of the disjunction between 3:13-20 and 3:21-35.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 86, 10-13.

⁷¹ Although Overland (Ibid., 12) makes this statement in reference to the form-critical work of Whybray, it is equally true of his own method.

Another literary study that includes consideration of the rhetoric of Proverbs 1-9 is the recent monograph by Daniel J. Estes. *Hear, My Son: Teaching & Learning in Proverbs 1-9*.⁷² As indicated by the title, this work "endeavors to synthesize the unorganized data from a portion of the book of Proverbs into a more systematic statement of the pedagogical theory that underlies its teachings."⁷³ Estes organizes this data into seven categories: the world view of Proverbs 1-9, values for education, goals, curriculum, the process of instruction, the role of the teacher, and the role of the learner.

While each of Estes' categories supplies helpful information for rhetorical analysis of the lectures, his discussion of the process of instruction is especially noteworthy. Estes acknowledges that "the process of instruction" is "the rhetoric of pedagogy."⁷⁴ Thus, his analysis of the process of instruction is, in fact, an investigation of the diverse rhetorical forms in Proverbs 1-9. In this analysis, he identifies nine distinct rhetorical strategies.⁷⁵ Five of these strategies, however, he limits to the interludes: address, description, condition with command, incentive, and invitation. Only four of Estes' categories feature the lectures: command with reasons, command with reasons and illustrations, command with consequences, and command with rhetorical questions. His rhetorical analysis of the lectures lacks detailed

⁷² D. Estes, *Hear My Son: Teaching and Learning in Proverbs 1-9*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 101-24.

attention to the nuances of the rhetoric; nonetheless, it provides a prelude for the type of analysis carried out in this dissertation.

In addition to his direct concern for the logos of the rhetoric, Estes considers what he calls the “role of the teacher.”⁷⁶ In rhetorical terms, analysis of the teacher's role, as well as discussion of the “curriculum for education,”⁷⁷ includes the development of the rhetor's ethos (credibility or right to be heard). For example, Estes claims that three sources are utilized by the sage of Proverbs 1-9: 1) personal observation, 2) tradition from Israel and other ancient Near Eastern cultures, and 3) revelation from God. As I mentioned in regard to traditio-historical study (see above), the second and third sources are significant factors in the development of the sage's ethos or authority. Indeed, Estes comments that the sage “does not speak by personal authority alone, but he is also the voice of the received tradition that transcends him.”⁷⁸ Thus, the sage “is qualified to speak because of his expert status as a knowledgeable and reliable transmitter of tradition.”⁷⁹ Similarly, the claim of information via revelation asserts a strong warrant to authority and the right to be heard.

The similar interests and practices of literary and rhetorical analysis make the literary studies of Lang, Burns, Overland, and Estes natural conversation partners in

⁷⁶ Ibid., 125-34.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 87-99.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 92.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 126.

the ensuing rhetorical exegesis. Thus, each of these scholars, now introduced, will return to the stage at a later point. Moreover, the works of Overland and Estes serve as excellent introductions to the rhetorical issues pursued in this dissertation, namely, the ethos, pathos, and logos of the ten lectures. These overtures lead us to the final category of this survey, namely, studies with primary interest in the rhetoric of Proverbs 1-9.

Rhetorical Analyses

Interpretations of Proverbs 1-9 with dominant rhetorical interests, which include the lectures, are uncommon and limited in scope.⁸⁰ In addition to the literary studies of Overland and Estes, numerous articles and essays have made passing reference to the rhetoric of these chapters.⁸¹ However, four essays comprise the totality of focused rhetorical study of Proverbs 1-9 in the twentieth century.⁸²

⁸⁰ A few studies, not considered here, utilize the "rhetorical criticism" of James Muilenburg (see chp. 2) and focus exclusively on the interludes: Phyllis Tribble, "Wisdom Builds a Poem: The Architecture of Proverbs 1:20-33," *JBL* 94 (1975): 509-18; Matirice Gilbert, "Le Discours de la Sagesse en Proverbes 8. Structure et Coherence," *BETL* 51 (1979): 202-218; and Duck Woo Nam, "A Rhetorical-Critical Study of the Speeches of Wisdom, in Proverbs 1-9," M.Th. thesis (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994).

⁸¹ E.g., Michael V. Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," *JBL* 113 (1994): 233-43; and "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," 613-633.

⁸² Rhetorical study of Proverbs, outside chapters 1-9, has fared somewhat better. See Philip Johannes Nel, *The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs*, BZAW, vol. 158 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982); Jutta Krispenz, *Spruchkompositionen im Buch Proverbia*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, vol. 349 (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1989); Dave Lawrence Bland, "A Rhetorical Perspective on the Sentence Sayings of the Book of Proverbs," Ph.D. diss. (University of Washington, 1994); Roland Meynet, "'Pour Comprendre Proverbe et Enigme' Analyse Rhetorique de Proverbs 1:1-7; 10:1-5; 26:1-12," in *Ouvrir les Ecritures*, ed. Pietro Bovati (Paris: Cerf, 1995), 97-118.

The first and most significant of these essays is by J.N. Aletti, "Seduction et Parole en Proverbes I-IX."⁸³ In this seminal essay, Aletti proposed that what seduces the young man in Proverbs 1-9 above anything else are the speeches of the strange woman. For example, in chapter 7, the young man is not seduced by the perfume, rare fabric, or the absence of the woman's husband. Rather, he is made aware of these things by the woman's speech and he follows her because of the persuasiveness of her speech.⁸⁴ Thus, the objective of Aletti's essay is to understand how the seductive speeches in Proverbs 1-9 work.

In order to discern the mechanism of the seductive rhetoric, Aletti compares the first speech of wisdom (1:22-33) to the speeches of the strange woman (7:14-20) and the wicked men (1:11-14). He draws two conclusions from this comparison. First, the speeches of the strange woman and wicked men seduce by utilizing and confusing the vocabulary of the father and woman wisdom. The seduction operates by inverting the rhetoric of the opposition. Aletti writes,

Does not the greatest seduction consist of inviting to do evil with the same words (almost) that appeal to good? The malicious speak to the inexperienced: "we will fill (מלא) our houses with booty" (1:13), and the sage affirms in the same way: "I endow wealth on those who love me and I fill (מלא) their treasures" (8:21). "Rejoice in the wife of your youth . . . may you (ידים) be intoxicated (רה) by her at all times," says the teacher (5:19), and as an echo, the adulteress repeats: "Come let us take our fill of love (ידים: a clear allusion to 5:19) until morning" (7:18). The clearest example, because of stylistic

⁸³ J.N. Aletti, "Seduction et Parole en Proverbes I-IX," *VT* 27 (1977): 129-44.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

marks, is found in Proverbs 9 where dame Wisdom and dame Folly both say: "You who are inexperienced turn in here!" (9:4,15).⁸⁵

Aletti observes numerous instances of such *brouillage axiologique* in the speeches of the wicked men, the strange woman, and woman folly. These opponents invite the young man to participate in illicit behavior with the same words used by the sage to appeal to good character. Thus, their speeches seduce by numbing and confusing the young man's capacity to discern.

Second, the speeches of the strange woman and the wicked men seduce by contradicting the sage's assertion of consequences. Seduction is not achieved by justifying the illicit action or extolling the object of pleasure, but by a counter-evaluation of the consequences.⁸⁶ For example, the adulteress persuades the young man that the consequences of adultery affirmed by the sage (5:25-35) can and will be avoided: her husband is far away and will not return until the full moon (7:19-20). Similarly, the wicked men attempt to persuade the young man that happiness and prosperity may be found without following the way of the sages (1:13-14). Thus, the mechanism of seduction consists of divorcing socially accepted consequences from

⁸⁵ Ibid., 133 (my translation).

la [sic] plus grande seduction ne consiste-t-elle pas a inviter au mal avec (preque) les memes paroles que celui qui appelle au bien? Les mechants disent a l'inexperiente (1:13): "nous emplirons (*ml'*) nos maisons de butin", et la sagesse affirme de la meme facon (viii 21): "je procure des ressources a ceux qui m'aiment et je remplis (*ml'*) leurs coffres". "Jouis de la femme de to jeunesse . . . que ses seins (*ddym*) t'enivrent (*rwh*) tout le temps" dit le maitre (v 19), et, comme en echo, la femme adultere repete: "viens! enivrons-nous (*rwh*) de vouppte (*ddymn*; allusion evidente a v 19) jusqu'au matin" (vii 18). L'exemple le plus net, parce que stylistiquement marque, se trouve en Prov. ix ou dame Sagesse et dame Insensee disent l'une et l'autre: "que celui qui est inexperiente se detourne par ici! (versets 4 et 15).

⁸⁶ Ibid., 134.

their socially condemned behaviors. Aletti observed that this means of seduction threatens to destroy the values on which the community relies for existence.⁸⁷

Aletti's insights were taken up by two essays published in 1989. In the first, Gale Yee built on Aletti's thesis that what seduces the young man are the speeches of the strange woman.⁸⁸ While Aletti focused on the mechanics or rhetoric of individual speeches, Yee explored the arrangement of the speeches in Proverbs 1-9. She proposed that these speeches were arranged in chiasmic patterns in order to highlight the virtues of woman wisdom and to expose the risks of the foreign woman.⁸⁹

Yee's study combined literary concern for the unity of Proverbs 1-9 with keen sensitivity to matters of rhetoric. In addition to uncovering more examples of Aletti's *brouillage axiologique*, she detected, even more than Aletti, the incredible importance that speech (rhetoric) plays in these chapters. For example, Yee pointed out that part of the heuristic method of the writer of Proverbs 1-9 included the citation of speeches by various persons. Within the instructional framework of the father's speeches, the writer cites speeches by sinners, woman wisdom, the father's father, the son, the strange woman and woman folly.⁹⁰ Further, the father's warnings against the strange woman consistently emphasize the irresistible seductiveness of her speech. It is the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 140-142.

⁸⁸ Gale A. Yee, "I Have Perfumed My Bed with Myrrh': The Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1-9," *JSOT* 43 (1989): 53-68.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 53.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 55.

concern of the father.⁹¹ In other words, these chapters document a war of words and this rhetorical battle for the allegiance of the son provides the essence of Proverbs 1-9. In another essay published in 1989, Carol Newsom reiterated the preoccupation of Proverbs 1-9 with speech about speech, or, to use her terminology, discourse about discourse.⁹² To be sure, Newsom does not adhere to a rhetorical method in her study. Rather, she combines insights from the linguistic theory of Emile Benveniste, feminist criticism, and discourse analysis to investigate the symbolic structure of Proverbs 1-9.

The significance of Newsom's study for rhetoric is that her discourse analysis discloses the rhetorical subtlety of the lectures, a subtlety largely overlooked by Aletti and Yee. For example, Newsom summarizes the theme of the first lecture as: "how to resist interpellation by a rival discourse."⁹³ She notes that the speech of the sinners is completely controlled by the father and shaped in such a way that their invitation to the son can scarcely be taken at face value. In other words, the son is not being warned about adopting a career as a murderous bandit. The rhetoric operates more subtly. The invitation of the brigands is a metaphor for illicit economic activity, confirmed by verse 19: "such are the ways of all who cut a big profit."⁹⁴ Newsom further asserts that the real problem addressed in this lecture is a challenge to the

⁹¹ Ibid., 61, 65-66.

⁹² Carol A. Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1-9," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy, L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 142-60.

⁹³ Ibid., 144.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 145.

vertical structure of authority (espoused by the father) by a horizontal structure based on common enterprise and immediate access to wealth (espoused by the sinners). Lurking beneath the surface is a generational chasm.

Four years after Aletti's initial foray into the rhetoric of Proverbs 1-9, James Crenshaw issued an appeal for further study of the rhetorical techniques found in Israel's wisdom literature.⁹⁵ At the time, Crenshaw was responding to George Kennedy's assertion that rhetorical consciousness was entirely foreign to the nature of biblical literature. Specifically, Kennedy proposed that the biblical claim to speak with divine authority excluded the need for rhetoric or the practice of persuasion.⁹⁶ In order to challenge Kennedy's claim, Crenshaw offered a brief rhetorical analysis of texts from Israel's wisdom literature, including Proverbs 1-9.

In his analysis of Proverbs 1-9, Crenshaw challenged what he perceived to be another misconception among biblical scholars (e.g., Zimmerli), namely, the absolute authority of the instruction form and the advisory character of the sentence proverb. He demonstrated that

a peculiar irony persists: precisely where authority is most lacking, i.e., in instructions, critics assume its pervading presence, and in sentences, which compel assent without the slightest reinforcement, interpreters emphasize their advisory character.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ James Crenshaw, "Wisdom and Authority: Sapiential Rhetoric and Its Warrants," *Congress Volume, VTSup* 32 (1981): 10-29.

⁹⁶ George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 120. Kennedy has modified his position since 1980 (see chp. 2).

⁹⁷ Crenshaw, "Wisdom and Authority," 16.

Crenshaw established his position by pointing out the use of sentence proverbs to establish the authority (or validity) of four “instructions.”⁹⁸ In these instructions, the proverbs are the heart of the sage's rhetorical argument. Thus, in a single stroke, Crenshaw demonstrated the careful rhetorical construction of the instructions (against Kennedy) and challenged the scholarly consensus that the sentence proverbs were inherently less authoritative than the instructions.⁹⁹

To summarize, the studies of Aletti, Yee, and Newsom are of fundamental significance to this dissertation. These scholars have demonstrated both the importance of rhetoric within Proverbs 1-9 and the potential of utilizing rhetorical analysis in the interpretation of these chapters. They have also shown that the lectures of Proverbs 1-9 are not crass speeches that simply repeat the same appeals *ad infinitum*. Rather, the lectures of Proverbs 1-9 exhibit marks of careful, self-conscious, and subtle rhetorical thought.

Crenshaw's essay, beyond the specifics of his rhetorical exegesis, also has special significance to this study. First, Crenshaw directly relates his work to the rhetorical studies of George Kennedy. Although he argues against Kennedy,

⁹⁸ Crenshaw's four "instructions" include two lectures (1:6[sic]-19, 6:20-35) and two interludes (6:6-11, 9:1-18).

⁹⁹ In addition to his comments regarding Proverbs 1-9, Crenshaw ("Wisdom and Authority," 17-28) utilized the concepts and terminology of classical Western rhetorical theory to explore Job and I Esdras 3:1-5:3. Regarding Job, he concentrated on the rhetorical development of ethos (the speaker's claim to authority), pathos (the ways a speaker sways belief or moves an audience to action), and logos (the logic of the speech itself). In his study of I Esdras, Crenshaw focused on basic rhetorical devices (choice of material, arrangement, vocabulary, and style), and the combination of these devices to produce a persuasive speech.

Kennedy's theoretical work in classical Western rhetoric greatly informs Crenshaw's practice of rhetorical analysis. Similarly, this study builds on studies by Kennedy (see chp. 2). Second, Crenshaw concludes his essay with the following claim:

Similar forays into other wisdom texts, which I hope to make in the near future, should reveal extensive mastery of rhetorical technique even where the hand of authority weighs heavily upon the material. In a word, Israel's teachers spoke with authority, but they also developed and refined persuasion to an art.¹⁰⁰

This dissertation may be viewed as a response to Crenshaw's challenge: to reveal the mastery of rhetorical technique in the lectures of Proverbs 1-9 and, thus, demonstrate how Israel's sages developed and refined persuasion to a fine art.

Summary

This survey has attempted to situate my rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures within recent scholarly work on Proverbs 1-9 and to introduce key studies that will reappear throughout this dissertation. While acknowledging the merits and contributions of each of the methods and foci discussed, my rhetorical analysis is most closely allied to form and literary critical methods. Traditio-historical studies and studies of the women in Proverbs 1-9 are also partners, but most frequently, silent partners to rhetorical analysis.

As in other biblical studies, one may also perceive in this survey an evolution from concentrated diachronic, to synchronic analysis, to an emerging concern for the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 29. To date, Crenshaw has not yet published additional rhetorical studies of Israel's wisdom literature. See, however, his forthcoming monograph: *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* (Doubleday, Forthcoming).

rhetorical features of Proverbs 1-9. It is the goal of this dissertation to continue this line of development by filling a major lacuna observed in this survey, namely, a systematic rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures.

Chapter Two

RHETORICAL CRITICISM AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Rhetorical criticism, as a methodological description, is rife with problematic ambiguity. The definition, theory, and practice of rhetoric has been debated from its inception in ancient Greece to modern times. Its history is one of constant change, adaptation, and redefinition. Consequently, rhetorical analysis in biblical exegesis is not a unified or single method. Rather, late twentieth century biblical interpretation is the beneficiary of several diverse practices of rhetorical criticism, each with legitimate roots in the history of rhetoric.

In this chapter I will define the rhetorical method to be used in this dissertation. To begin, because my method builds on ancient rhetorical foundations, it will be helpful to preface the definition of my rhetorical method with a brief survey of the emergence of rhetoric in the ancient West. Next, I will review the use of rhetorical criticism in biblical studies. This review will include an historical survey of the use of rhetoric and an examination of four contemporary rhetorical methods in biblical interpretation. Each of these methods raises important theoretical questions, e.g., the definition of rhetorical criticism. Thus, in addition to a description of each method, I will address the theoretical questions they raise and so begin to articulate the

underpinnings of my own method. Finally, I will present a programmatic statement of the rhetorical method to be used in my analysis of the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9.¹

A Brief Survey of the Emergence of Rhetoric in the Ancient West

Although this dissertation is a rhetorical analysis of an ancient non-Western text (Prov 1-9), consideration of rhetoric in the ancient West is a necessary starting point. On the one hand, presently, there is no comprehensive analysis of ancient Israelite rhetorical theory or practice.² On the other hand, no other ancient society conceptualized their rhetorical practices to the degree of the rhetors of ancient Greece and Rome.³ Thus, while limited by different cultural conditions (see below), ancient Western rhetorical theory contributes essential conceptual terminology for identifying and discussing the rhetorical features of non-Western texts and, hence, the ten lectures in Proverbs 1-9.

The origins of ancient Western rhetorical theory may be traced to the Homeric traditions of the 10th – 11th centuries BCE. However, most scholars attribute the rise of

¹ The method I espouse here would also be useful for the study of the speeches by woman Wisdom (1:20-33, 8:1-36, 9:1-12). Although rhetorical analysis need not be limited to texts that present themselves as speeches (e.g., 3:13-20 and 6:1-19), the method developed in this dissertation especially focuses on rhetorical criticism as it applies to the analysis of speeches.

² Some partial analyses are beginning to appear. See Ronald C. Katz, *The Structure of Ancient Arguments: Rhetoric and Its Near Eastern Origin* (New York: Shapolsky/Steinmatzky, 1977); Isaac Rabinowitz, "Pre-Modern Jewish Study of Rhetoric: An Introductory Bibliography," *Rhetorica* 3 (1985): 137-144; and Margaret D. Zulick, "The Active Force of Hearing: The Ancient Hebrew Language of Persuasion," *Rhetorica* 10 (1992): 367-380.

³ See George A. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5.

rhetoric, as a discrete discourse, to writers in the 5th - 6th centuries BCE. It is not possible here, because of the compass of this history, to present even an outline of the emergence of rhetorical theory in the ancient West.⁴ Rather, drawing from the histories of this era written by Thomas Conley⁵ and George Kennedy,⁶ I will introduce the reader to the questions addressed by ancient rhetorical theory and the diverse answers that the rhetors of the ancient West gave to these questions. Here, in addition to its contribution of conceptual terminology, ancient Western rhetoric will make a second donation to this dissertation, namely that, as Conley points out, both the questions addressed by rhetoric and the diverse answers are the same today as twenty-five centuries ago.⁷

Rhetorical theory addresses the nature and function of persuasive discourse. Is there an absolute Truth or authority to which a rhetor can appeal? If so, what are the source(s) of this Truth? If not, what is the basis of human action? What is the role of the rhetor? Is the rhetor to persuade the audience to accept Truth, his/her opinion, or to present all possible sides of an issue and work with the audience to achieve a consensus? If the task of the rhetor is to persuade, what are the most effective

⁴ The bibliography on ancient Western rhetoric is immense. See Richard Leo Enos, "The Classical Period," in *The Present State of Scholarship in Historical and Contemporary Rhetoric*, ed. Winifred Bryan Homer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 10-39.

⁵ Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in The European Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁶ George A. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); and *Classical Rhetoric*, 3-85.

⁷ Conley, *Rhetoric*, 24.

methods of persuasion? These are some of the questions addressed by rhetorical theorists in the ancient West and rhetoricians in contemporary biblical studies.

In the ancient West, there were, according to Conley, four distinct models of rhetoric, each with "its own fundamental commitments and each with its own view of the nature and ends of rhetoric."⁸ The first two models, Protagorean and Gorgianic, may be characterized as "Sophistic" because of their stance against the absolute nature of truth. The third, Platonic, challenged the Sophistic view of truth and its corresponding theory of rhetoric. And the fourth model, Aristotelian, questioned elements of both Sophistic and Platonic rhetoric.

Protagoras (c. 490-400 BCE) may be loosely described as an ancient postmodern.⁹ According to Protagoras, absolute Truth was inaccessible to humans and perhaps even nonexistent. All matters of "truth" are contestable. Thus, disputes must be resolved by "antilogic," the rhetorical method of examining both sides of the question or issue, without appeal to absolute standards of Truths traditional standards of behavior, or universal principles. In this system, "man is the measure and measurer of all things."¹⁰ Consequently, the role of the rhetor and rhetoric in society is of paramount importance. The rhetor must present both sides of an argument clearly and

⁸ Conley, *Rhetoric*, 23.

⁹ Kennedy's description of the Sophistry associated with Protagoras and Gorgias in ancient Greece (*Comparative Rhetoric*, 225) aptly describes many postmoderns: "[Sophistry] was characterized by celebration of power and speech, philosophical relativism or skepticism, questioning traditional beliefs of the society; fascination with an apparent ability to demonstrate a paradox or prove two sides of an issue; and an interest in the nature of language and linguistic experimentation."

¹⁰ Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, 13.

persuasively for the audience to reach an intelligent decision (*doxa*) on a course of action. For Protagoras, it is this human opinion (*doxa*), not absolute Truth, that is the only basis for action.

Gorgias (c. 480-375 BCE), like Protagoras, rejected the authority of tradition and the idea of absolute Truth. He also asserted that the only basis of action is opinion (*doxa*). His philosophical relativism is exhibited in his famous thesis that "nothing exists, if it did it could not be apprehended, and if it could be apprehended, that apprehension could not be communicated."¹¹ However, Gorgias understood the role of the rhetor differently than Protagoras. While Protagoras viewed rhetoric as a presentation of both sides of an issue by an active rhetor to an active audience, who must decide the issue, Gorgias viewed rhetoric as the skillful presentation of an active rhetor who casts a spell over a passive audience in order to persuade it to adopt the position (*doxa*) of the rhetor.

Contemporaries of Protagoras and Gorgias heavily criticized their teaching of Sophistic rhetorics. Like contemporary critics of postmodernism, many Greeks viewed the rejection of absolute Truth and the authority of tradition as a direct threat to the fabric of society. For example, Aristophanes accused Protagoras of teaching his students "how to make the worse case appear the better,"¹² and Plato accused Gorgias

¹¹ Summarized by Kennedy (*The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, 14) from Gorgias' *On the Nonexistent, or On Nature*.

¹² Summarized by Conley (*Rhetoric*, 6) from Aristophanes *The Clouds*, 112f. (Unless otherwise noted, all references to Classical Texts utilize the reference system of the *Loeb Classical Library*.)

of "putting a knife in the hands of a madman in the crowd."¹³ Conley sums up the problem:

the reliance of both on *doxa* alone deprives them of any objective criterion by which to distinguish between what is true or false or between what is right or wrong. Protagorean debate, in other words, could easily, degenerate to a dialogue between two equally ignorant and misguided parties, and Gorgianic persuasion could easily become a cynical exercise in manipulation by one who had mastered the techniques of charming one's listeners.¹⁴

It must be mentioned, in defense of Sophistic rhetoric, that Isocrates, another Sophist, emphasized the importance of the rhetor being a good person who is actively involved in promoting the welfare of the community. Nonetheless, for many, the Sophistic rejection of Truth and traditional authority marked them at best as suspicious, and at worst as heretics who threatened to destroy society.

Plato (427-347 BCE) had no tolerance for the Sophistic concept of opinion (*doxa*). According to Plato, absolute Truth (the eternal and immutable essence of things) did exist and rhetoric, as defined by the Sophists, was not only misguided, but dangerous. Following Socrates, Plato argued that Truth was absolute, knowable, and should guide human activity. This philosophy led Plato to scathing attacks on the Sophists in *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*.¹⁵

Platonic rhetoric may be described as either anti-rhetoric rhetoric, philosophical rhetoric, or True rhetoric. Plato rejected the Protagorean rhetoric of debate, presenting

¹³ Summarized by Conley (*Rhetoric*, 6) from *Gorgias* 469 C 8ff.

¹⁴ Conley, *Rhetoric*, 7.

¹⁵ Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. W.R.M. Lamb, *LCL*, ed. E.H. Warmington (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925); and *Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler, *LCL*, ed. G.P. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914).

both sides of an issue to determine which is better, and the Gorgianic rhetoric of casting a spell over an audience in order to lead it to the opinion of the rhetor. Platonic rhetoric begins and ends with Truth. The rhetor's task is to know what is True and to lead the ignorant listener to the Truth by means of dialectical reasoning. Thus, the effective rhetor must understand Truth, understand methods or forms of argumentation (primarily dialectics), and understand the nature of the audience.¹⁶

Aristotle (384-322 BCE), one of Plato's students, challenged his teacher on his limited definition of Truth as the eternal and immutable essence of things. In Aristotle's view, truth must also include knowledge obtained from practical and productive spheres of life, not just esoteric universal ideas. As a consequence of this expansion of truth, Aristotle realized that the nature of truth is not always stable. For example, "We cannot expect of ethics the same rigor we would expect from geometry."¹⁷ In practical and productive spheres of life, truth is what *usually happens* rather than an absolute. To be sure, Aristotle was not a Sophist; he believed in truth. But against Plato, he believed truth included more than the eternal and immutable essence of things.

Aristotle's rejection of Plato's understanding of truth led to a challenge of Plato's disregard for rhetoric. For Aristotle, dialectic and rhetoric differ, but are not

¹⁶ Conley, *Rhetoric*, 12.

¹⁷ As cited by Conley (*Rhetoric*, 14), from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.3.1-4. See also 2.2.3.

opposed to one another: "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic."¹⁸ Dialectic is primarily a philosophical discourse that derives its arguments from universal opinion. Rhetoric is a political discourse that derives its arguments from particular opinions. Both are legitimate "arts," but differ in form and subject. Kennedy summarizes Aristotle's stance:

Aristotle was practical enough to recognize the usefulness of rhetoric as a tool. Those speaking the truth and doing so justly, have, he thought (*Rhetoric* 1355a21ff.), an obligation to be persuasive. They need rhetoric since the subjects under discussion are not known scientifically and thus are not capable of absolute demonstration.¹⁹

Aristotle's understanding of truth and rhetoric as a tool for the advancement of truth led him to produce one of the earliest handbooks on rhetorical theory, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*. In this work, he defines the art of rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever."²⁰ Thus, the rhetor must understand the difference between Truth and probabilities, and how to develop a convincing argument based on probability. I will return to Aristotle's concept of persuasion when I develop my own rhetorical method.

It may be helpful to consider one final issue regarding ancient Western rhetoric, namely, why four rhetorics instead of one? As I have pointed out, Protagorean, Gorgianic, Platonic, and Aristotelian rhetoric distinguish themselves on the basis of their responses to two related questions. First, what is the nature of truth?

¹⁸ Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, *LCL* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 1.1.

¹⁹ Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, 18.

²⁰ Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, 15.

Is truth absolute (Plato), inaccessible if existent (Protagoras & Gorgias) or inclusive of both absolutes and what usually happens (Aristotle)? Second, what is the nature of rhetoric? Is rhetoric a cooperative exercise between a rhetor and an audience (Gorgias), or the active persuasion of a rhetor over an audience (Protagoras, Plato, Aristotle)? But why did these rhetors respond to the same questions in different ways? According to Conley, each of these rhetorical models may be understood as different responses to shifting political conditions in Athens.

For the sophists, Athenian reform presented an occasion for systematic thinking about rhetoric. Thus, Protagorean rhetoric supplies a rationale for the resolution of problems by means of public discussion in the absence of political or ethical absolutes. 'Gorgianic' rhetoric likewise rejects claims to absolute knowledge of what is true and good, but offers a set of instructions that would make it possible for an orator to prevail in the current system, rather than a rationale for the system itself. Plato's response, as we have seen, is negative, denying the legitimacy both of rhetoric as it was taught and practiced and of the democratic system that made it possible.²¹

In summary, ancient rhetorical theory was both fostered by cultural conditions and a response to these conditions. Rhetorical theory has never existed in a vacuum.

Rhetorical Criticism in Biblical Studies

1. Early History to the Demise of Rhetoric in Twentieth Century Biblical Studies

Rhetorical criticism was a significant method in biblical (especially NT) interpretation from the earliest exegetes through the 17th and 18th centuries.²² For

²¹ Conley, *Rhetoric*, 13.

²² See the histories of rhetoric in biblical interpretation by Kennedy (*Classical Rhetoric*, 132-241), Wilhelm Wuellner ("Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" CBQ 49 [1987]: 450-451), Burton Mack (*Rhetoric and the New Testament* [Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1989], 10), and Phyllis Tribble (*Rhetorical Criticism*, GBS [Minneapolis: Fortress Press,

example, Augustine (354-430 CE), a student of rhetoric, interpreted biblical texts by means of rhetorical analysis.²³ In the Middle Ages, Christian (e.g., Cassiodorus of Italy [c. 487-580 CE],²⁴ the Venerable Bede of Britain [673-735 CE])²⁵ and Jewish scholars (e.g., Saadya Gaon [882-942 CE], Moses ibn Ezra [c. 1055-1140 CE])²⁶ drew

14-17).

²³ In his treatise *On Christian Teaching* ([*De Doctrina Christiana*] trans. R.P.H. Green [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], 4.19-60), Augustine raises the question of how a person can best conduct a "careful investigation" and thus gain a "real understanding" of the scriptures. He responds with exemplary exegeses of Romans 5:3-5, II Corinthians 11:16-30, and Amos 6:1-6 in which he identifies the "rules of eloquence" followed in these texts (i.e., rhetorical devices such as climax, invective, and elaboration). He concludes: "As certain eloquent and discerning authorities were able to see and say, the things that are learnt in the so called art of public speaking would not have been observed, noted; and systematized into a discipline if they had not first been found in the minds of orators; so why be surprised if they are also found in the words of men sent by God, the creator of all minds. We should therefore acknowledge that our canonical authors and teachers are eloquent, and not just wise, with a kind of eloquence appropriate to the kind of persons they were" (4.60).

²⁴ P.G. Walsh (*Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms*, trans. P.G. Walsh, ACW, vol. 51 [New York: Paulist Press, 1990], 1:16) summarizes Cassiodorus' use of rhetoric in his exposition of the Psalms: "Following the traditional division of speeches documented in detail by Quintilian, he distinguishes between the demonstrative type (the speech of praise or blame appropriate for formal occasions), the deliberative type (which was delivered in political assemblies and offered persuasion or dissuasion on particular courses of action), and the judicial variety (uttered in pleading in a court of law). Examples of all three are offered in the course of the commentary; naturally enough, he equates the greatest number of psalms with the demonstrative category, since they are predominantly expressions of praise to the Creator. Then, in outlining the structure of individual psalms he frequently employs the terminology of the rhetoricians, who prescribe appropriate patterns for the different types of speech; for example, the judicial speech is divided into *exordium*, *narratio*, *partitio*, *confirmatio*, *reprehensio*, *conclusio*."

²⁵ Bede, following Cassiodorus, was especially sensitive to figures tropes and the poetic structure of biblical books (see *De schematis et tropes*). He applied his method in studies of the tabernacle (*De tabernaculo* [On the Tabernacle]) and temple (*De templo* [On the Temple]). Bede also claimed that Greek rhetorical devices originated from the Hebrew. (See Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 15; and Dom Jean Leclercq, "The Exposition and Exegesis of Scripture from Gregory the Great to St Bernard," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe, vol. 2 [Cambridge: University Press, 1969], 186)

²⁶ See Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 16.

attention to the importance of recognizing rhetorical devices in the interpretation of biblical texts. This rhetorical consciousness continued in the Renaissance, most notably with the Jewish scholar Judah Messer Leon (c. 1420-1498 CE), who wrote a treatise entitled *Sepher Nopheth Suphim* (*The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow*) that utilized classical terms and the system of ancient Western rhetoric for the interpretation of scripture.²⁷ In addition to Leon, other Renaissance scholars (e.g., Erasmus [c. 1466-1536 CE])²⁸ also asserted the importance of rhetoric for the proper understanding of scripture.

The modern era of biblical studies continued to see exegetes who stressed the importance of rhetoric (e.g., Baruch Spinoza [1632-1677 CE];²⁹ see also Blass, Debrunner, and Funk's *Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, and Liddell and Scott's

²⁷ Tribble (ibid., 17) describes this work: "Versed in Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintillian, he not only cataloged biblical literary devices by classical terms but appropriated the entire system of ancient rhetoric for the scriptures. Yet he maintained, as had the Christian exegetes Cassiodorus and Bede, that the Bible, not the classics, constituted the source of rhetoric. '[I]t is the Torah which was the giver.' Scripture became then the primary textbook for the art of discourse and persuasion."

²⁸ Erasmus advised (*On the Method of Study*, trans. Brain McGregor, Collected Works of Erasmus, vol. 23, ed. Craig R. Thompson [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978], 670) that it would be advantageous for the interpreter to "have at your fingertips the chief points of rhetoric, namely propositions, the grounds of proof, figures of speech, amplifications, and the rules governing transitions. For these are conducive not only to criticism but also to imitation." In his own practice, he used rhetorical terms to describe textual features. For example, in his *Paraphrase on the Acts of the Apostles* (trans., Robert D. Sider, Collected Works of Erasmus, vol. 50, ed. Robert D. Sider [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995]), Erasmus employs rhetorical terminology (e.g., exordium [18], *proofs* [96]) to illuminate the text. See also, Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 18; Fr Louis Bouyer, "Erasmus in Relation to the Medieval Biblical Tradition," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe, vol. 2 (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 501.

²⁹ Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 19.

Greek-English Lexicon).³⁰ However, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, rhetorical study of the Bible experienced a sharp decline. To be sure, "rhetorical studies" continued to be published, but these studies increasingly defined rhetoric as literary stylistics, not as the art of persuasion.³¹ By the middle of the 20th century, rhetorical study of the Bible was comatose.

The authors of *The Postmodern Bible*, The Bible and Culture Collective (hence, the Collective), attribute the demise of rhetoric in modern biblical studies to three factors. First, the modern idea of the unicity of Truth in Western philosophy rendered rhetoric impotent. Here, the Collective calls special attention to the educational reform of Peter Ramus (1515-1572 CE), "whose effect was the institutionalization of a separation of the study of thought or content from the study of form or feeling."³² Ultimately, this separation of content from form led to the use of poetry for expressing feeling and the use of scientific discourse for the demonstration of truth. Rhetoric was discarded by both and "viewed suspiciously as mere ornamentation."³³

The Collective's point may be augmented by what I have already observed from the history of ancient Western rhetoric. The modern assestion of absolute Truth is akin to Plato's claims about Truth: Truth is absolute, knowable, and must be the

³⁰ Mack (*Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 10-11) points out the prevalent use of terms from classical rhetoric in both of these volumes, e.g., *anacoluthon*, *antithesis*, *ellipsis*, *paronomasia*, *periphrasis*.

³¹ Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 5.

³² "The Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 156.

³³ *Ibid.*, 157.

basis of human action. In such philosophy, ancient or modern, rhetoric tends to lose its importance.³⁴ Thus, both Plato and moderns viewed rhetoric with suspicion, if not rejecting it outright, because it seemed to threaten Truth.

A second reason the Collective cites for the demise of rhetoric is the redefinition of rhetoric as mere poetics, stylistics, hermeneutics, or literary study. They are not clear, however, about why this redefinition led to the rejection of rhetoric. Kennedy has pointed out that this shift from "primary" rhetoric to "secondary" rhetoric is a persistent feature in the history of rhetoric. Such *letteraturizzazione* occurred in the Hellenistic era, the Roman Empire, medieval France, and in the 16th and 18th centuries throughout Europe. Kennedy suggests that the cause for this shift in these societies was the tendency to teach rhetoric by rote (rather than as an intellectually demanding discipline), and the lack of opportunities for engaging in "primary" rhetoric.³⁵ While these factors may be adequate explanations for the *letteraturizzazione* of rhetoric in previous eras, they do not explain the demise of rhetoric in the 20th century.

In my opinion, the redefinition of rhetoric in the 20th century contributed to its neglect because of the modern idea and pursuit of Truth. In a modern age devoted to scientific discovery and interpretation, anything defined as or associated with poetics

³⁴ Kennedy (*The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, 14), regarding this debate in ancient rhetoric, writes "If, on the other hand, one were to argue that absolute truth both exists and is knowable, then certain principles, deducible from this truth, ought to guide activity. In this case rhetoric not only loses much of its importance, but becomes a potential danger because of its ability to present some other and erroneous course of action in an attractive way."

³⁵ Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 4-5.

hardly could be relevant. Truth was a matter of demonstrable scientific fact, not poetics. Thus, rhetoric, defined as stylistics, was dismissed as unimportant to the exegetical task of recovering Truth.

Third, the Collective credits the downfall of rhetoric to "the emerging awareness of alternative theories and practices of rhetoric."³⁶ They attribute this awareness to the study of indigenous European rhetorics in the late Middle ages (c. 1500) and the Western recognition of alternative practices of rhetoric in Jewish and Muslim cultures. According to the Collective, these experiences exposed the classical tradition as "enshrining an undifferentiated, universalized notion of rhetoric that ignored cultural difference,"³⁷ and thus led to the demise of rhetoric.

This third argument presents a better case for the New Rhetoric advocated by the Collective than an explanation for the demise of rhetoric in modernity. There is no evidence that the study of indigenous European rhetorics in the late Middle ages had a significant impact on rhetorical study 200-400 years later. Further, the acknowledgment of diverse Jewish and Muslim rhetorical traditions is a development of the late twentieth century, not a factor in the demise of rhetoric in the late nineteenth century.³⁸

³⁶ The Bible and Culture Collective, *Postmodern Bible*, 157.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 156-58.

³⁸ The writers that the Collective (*Ibid.*, 173) credits for demonstrating these rhetorical traditions are writers from the twentieth century, e.g., Isaac Rabinowitz, Philip Alexander, Erich Auerbach, Ronald Katz, and Wilhelm Wuellner.

Despite this objection, the Collective's basic thesis is accurate: The dawn of modernity hearkened the downfall of rhetoric. Whereas the rhetorical analysis of scripture flourished from the time of the earliest Christian and Jewish exegetes, the cultural (philosophical) shifts associated with the modern age challenged the necessity and even legitimacy of rhetoric. The ancient debate between the Sophists and Plato recurred, with Platonic rhetoric emerging as the victor. Consequently, rhetoric was redefined and displaced by the scientific recovery and presentation of Truth. To be sure, rhetoric, as the art of persuasion, was not entirely removed from the scholarly consciousness,³⁹ but it did lay dormant, awaiting more favorable cultural conditions.

2. The Reemergence of Rhetoric in Late Twentieth Century Biblical Studies

Just as rhetoric faded with the rise of modernism, so it began to blossom again with the emergence of postmodernism. The deterioration of modernity, evident as early as the late 19th century, accelerated with the cultural shifts and crises of the 1960's and 70's. During this time, the presuppositions that led to the demise of rhetoric found themselves under siege. Postmodern philosophers, like their ancient Sophistic counterparts, challenged the idea of an absolute universal Truth. Some acknowledged that Truth may exist, but asserted that it was not recoverable by humans. Others rejected any idea of absolute Truth, i.e., truth is nothing more than a claim in the hands of those exercising power within a culture. In this context, a

³⁹ See Thomas H. Olbricht, "The Flowering of Rhetorical Criticism in America," in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 79-91.

recognition of the cultural specificity and instability of truth reemerged, and with it, a renewed respect for the role of rhetoric.

Within this general cultural turbulence, Burton Mack has identified three key moments in the revival of rhetoric for biblical studies.⁴⁰ According to Mack, the initial stimulus came from the 1955 SBL presidential address of Amos Wilder: "Scholars, Theologians, and Ancient Rhetoric."⁴¹ This address drew attention to the interpretation of imaginative-symbolic language, especially in New Testament eschatological texts. Wilder described this discourse as "an extraordinary rhetoric of faith" and encouraged the use literary methods sensitive to anthropology and psychology for interpretation, rather than methods espoused by the ritual-myth school and the biblical theology school.⁴² His efforts led to a greater emphasis of the literary study of the Gospels, including a seminar at the annual SBL meeting on the parables and a greater dialogue between scholars who work from differing methodological vantage points. In recent years, Wilder's work has had a decisive influence on Vernon Robbins' development of "Socio-Rhetorical Criticism" (see below).⁴³

The second stimuli for the revival of rhetoric in biblical studies came from the 1968 SBL presidential address of James Muilenburg: "Form Criticism and Beyond."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Mack, *Rhetoric*, 12-17.

⁴¹ Amos Wilder, "Scholars, Theologians, and Ancient Rhetoric," *JBL* 75 (1956): 1-11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2,9.

⁴³ Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 2-3.

⁴⁴ "Form Criticism," 1-18.

In this speech, Muilenburg acknowledged the benefits of form critical study, but also delineated its inadequacies (e.g., the dismissal of the unique features of a text because of inordinate stress upon typical and representative features). Thus, he appealed for a step beyond form criticism, a step he called "rhetorical criticism," i.e., a careful literary study of the compositional features of the text. I will return to Muilenburg's appeal and his rhetorical method in greater detail below.

Although the addresses of Wilder and Muilenburg were important for the re-emergence of rhetoric in biblical studies, Mack claims that the third and most important stimulus came from the 1969 English translation of Perelman and Tyteca's 1958 French work, *Traite de l' Argumentation* (English Title: *The New Rhetoric*).⁴⁵ In general, *The New Rhetoric* was a revivification of Aristotelian rhetoric. More specifically, according to Mack, *The New Rhetoric* made three direct contributions to the renewal of rhetoric.⁴⁶ 1) Perelman and Tyteca defined rhetoric as argumentation. By this definition, they challenged the prevailing understanding of rhetoric as stylistic ornamentation and reasserted the ancient definition of rhetoric as the art of persuasion. 2) They emphasized the importance of the rhetorical situation for understanding the persuasive force of argumentation. This recognition provided an opportunity to bridge the gap between literary and social-historical criticism, an opportunity seized by many New Testament exegetes. 3) Perelman and Tyteca linked the persuasive power of

⁴⁵ Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969).

⁴⁶ Mack, *Rhetoric*, 14-17.

speech not only to its logic or argumentation, but to the manner in which it addresses the social and cultural history of its audience and speaker. Thus, they disassociated rhetoric from its poetic and stylistic limitations and argued for rhetoric as a social theory of language. Mack summarizes,

On this model, rhetorical performance belongs to human discourse just as surely as stance and style belong to any presentation of ourselves at moments of personal encounter. Rhetoric is to a society and its discourse what grammar is to a culture and its language. Rhetoric refers to the rules of the language games agreed upon as acceptable within a given society. The rules of rhetoric can be identified and studied, just as the rules of a grammar . . . Rhetorical theory defines the stakes as nothing less than the negotiation of our lives together.⁴⁷

Perelman and Tyteca's *The New Rhetoric* has played a significant role in the revival of rhetorical analysis in biblical studies, especially among scholars associated with the "New Rhetoric" (see below).⁴⁸ Additionally, in 1982 Perelman published an abbreviated and updated version of *The New Rhetoric* under the title *The Realm of Rhetoric* that has reached a even broader audience.⁴⁹

3. Rhetorical Methods in Twentieth Century Biblical Studies

Like its counter-part in ancient Greece, contemporary rhetorical theory is not univocal. Rather, there are four distinct practices of rhetorical criticism in contemporary biblical scholarship: Muilenburg's "Rhetorical Criticism," George

⁴⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁸ According to Mack (Ibid., 16), the impact of this publication may be gauged by the frequent references to this book by scholars in the 1970's and 80's.

⁴⁹ Chaim Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric*, Introduction by Carrol C. Arnold, trans. Williams Kluback (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982).

Kennedy's "Classical Rhetoric," the "New Rhetoric" of *The Postmodern Bible*, and Vernon Robbins' "Socio-Rhetorical Criticism." Although each method may be appropriately described as rhetorical, there are significant philosophical and procedural differences that distinguish these methods. Here, I will offer a brief description of these four types of contemporary biblical rhetorics and, in the process, begin to define my own rhetorical method vis-a-vis these rhetorics.

a. The "Rhetorical Criticism" of James Muilenburg:
The Definition of Rhetoric

At the time of his 1968 SBL presidential address, Muilenburg perceived a basic problem facing biblical interpreters: Form criticism had reached its limits and had begun to reach beyond its capacities. The merits of form-critical methodology, according to Muilenburg, were obvious. His concern, however, was for the excessive and exclusive use of the method.

To state our criticism in another way, form criticism by its very nature is bound to generalize because it is concerned with what is common to all the representatives of a genre, and therefore applies an external measure to the individual pericopes. It does not focus sufficient attention upon what is unique and unrepeatable, upon the particularity of the formulation.⁵⁰

It is against this backdrop that Muilenburg set forth his appeal for "rhetorical criticism" as a necessary step beyond form analysis.

Muilenburg's definition of rhetorical criticism corresponded to the prevailing definition of his time, namely, that "rhetorical criticism" was literary analysis. Thus,

⁵⁰ Muilenburg, "Form Criticism," 5.

his solicitation for rhetoric was an appeal for "persistent and painstaking attention to the modes of Hebrew literary composition,"⁵¹

What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predication are formulated and ordered into a unified whole. Such an enterprise I should describe as rhetoric and the methodology as rhetorical criticism.⁵²

In harmony with his goals, Muilenburg's rhetorical analysis proceeded in two steps: 1) isolation of the rhetorical unit, and 2) discernment of that unit's compositional features by careful literary analysis.

Muilenburg's appeal for a careful literary analysis that focuses on a text's compositional elements has thrived in the years since his address. His method of rhetorical-literary analysis has been clarified, broadened, and applied to numerous biblical texts. Consequently, there is an enormous and constantly growing bibliography of studies that follow Muilenburg's basic method of rhetorical criticism.⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid., 18.

⁵² Ibid., 8.

⁵³ See Duane F. Watson and Alan J. Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994). Exemplary collected essays include *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. J.J. Jackson and M. Kessler (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1974); and *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, ed. D.J. Clines, D.M. Gunn and A.J. Hauser (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982). See also, Dale Patrick and Allen Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990).

Certainly, scholars who claim heritage to Muilenburg's rhetoric are not methodologically univocal. For example, Phyllis Tribble, who associates herself with Muilenburg, adopts his catch phrase - "Proper articulation of form yields proper articulation of meaning" - in her work on Rhetoric (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 91). Consequently, her practice involves careful literary study of the form and composition of the text. However, she differs from her teacher in one significant way: While Muilenburg was thoroughly modern in his attempt to uncover the intention of the author ("Form Criticism," 7), Tribble has been

Muilenburg's appeal raises the fundamental question of the definition of rhetoric. Certainly, designating his method as "rhetorical criticism" is legitimate. Throughout its history, rhetoric has included concern for compositional artistry and, at times, rhetoric has been defined as literary analysis or poetics (see above, p. 50). Further, others who claim to be rhetorical critics have asserted similar definitions. For example, Martin Kessler proposes that "rhetorical criticism may serve as a suitable rubric for the kind of biblical criticism which deals with the literary analysis of the Massoretic text."⁵⁴

Nonetheless, despite its legitimacy, Muilenburg's definition of rhetoric has come under increasing fire in recent years. Wilhelm Wuellner has called Muilenburg's method "rhetoric restrained," or more curtly "the Babylonian captivity of rhetoric reduced to stylistics."⁵⁵ Michael Fox summarizes the complaint:

Rhetorical criticism of the Bible has focused almost exclusively on revealing the formal structures of a text: schemata formed by repetitions of roots, words, phrases and themes. Some of these studies attempt to connect the formal data with the text's meaning, though many often seem to assume that once the details of the construction of the text are laid out, its rhetoric has been discovered. But even the discovery of meaning does not constitute rhetorical

influenced by postmodernity (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 95-99). Her analysis works between the extremes of modernism (establishing The Meaning) and postmodernism (acknowledging unlimited meanings). Thus, while Tribble and others have adopted their teacher's method, these rhetorical studies are not univocal.

⁵⁴ Martin Kessler, "A Methodological Setting for Rhetorical Criticism," in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, ed. David J.A. Clines, David M. Gunn and Alan J. Hauser (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 10.

⁵⁵ Wilhelm Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 450-454, 457.

criticism as that term has been understood by the great (majority of rhetorical theorists from Aristotle on . . .⁵⁶

From another perspective, Muilenburg's method corresponds to Kennedy's definition of "secondary" rhetoric: Against "primary rhetoric" (the art of persuasion), "secondary rhetoric" is the slippage of rhetoric from persuasion to literary concerns, e.g., figures of speech and tropes.⁵⁷

To be fair, Muilenburg's aim was not Kennedy's "primary" rhetoric nor Wuellner's "rhetorical criticism." Muilenburg was not interested in the use of classical models for rhetorical analysis, i.e., rhetoric as the art of persuasion. Rather, in his address, he dates the origins of his method to Jerome "and before," omitting any reference to classical authors,⁵⁸ and decries earlier critics who were "too much dominated by Greek prototypes."⁵⁹ Some of his students have drawn from ancient models,⁶⁰ but their working definitions remain synonymous or near synonymous with literary analysis.

In contrast, my definition of rhetoric, while acknowledging the validity of Muilenburg's terminology, is drawn from the tradition associated with Aristotle: Rhetoric is persuasive discourse and rhetorical criticism is the systematic analysis of

⁵⁶ Michael Fox, "The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones," *HUCA* 51 (1980): 2.

⁵⁷ Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 4-5.

⁵⁸ Muilenburg, "Form Criticism," 8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁰ Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 5-9,14; Kessler, "Methodological Setting," 1-3.

the suasive dimensions of rhetoric. Thus, since I regard rhetoric as the art of persuasion, I will not limit my analysis to compositional and stylistic features. The focus of my analysis is the suasion of the ten lectures (Prov 1-9), especially as it is developed by the artistic proofs of logos, ethos, and pathos (see below). This approach works harmoniously with Muilenburg's rhetoric insofar as his method attends to selected elements (e.g., composition and style) within the broader concerns of rhetoric as suasion.

b. The "New Rhetoric" of the Postmodern Bible:
Rhetoric as Cultural Criticism

The Bible and Culture Collective, in *The Postmodern Bible*, recognize their "New Rhetoric" as largely a rediscovery of ancient Western rhetoric. What makes their rhetoric "new" is the explicit postmodern setting of their practice.⁶¹ Their goal is to recover and build on the foundations of ancient rhetorical theory in the present postmodern situation. Ultimately, the Collective suggests that rhetorical criticism should evolve and function as cultural criticism.

According to the Collective, the New Rhetoric retrieves and builds upon five crucial components of ancient rhetoric: 1) the idea of rhetoric as verbal expression, 2) the view that truth is something to be discovered, 3) the concern with the creation of meaning and the relationship of this creation to the domain of hermeneutics, 4) the role of rhetoric in social discourse and societal formation, and 5) the validity and

⁶¹ The Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible*, 149-86.

importance of appeal to the emotions.⁶² Against this background, the Collective calls for a "self-reflexive" rhetorical criticism.

Self-reflexive rhetorics makes three demands of the interpreter. First, it demands a recognition of the role of readers in creating meaning and thus requires readers to be aware of their own rhetorical situations and interests.⁶³ By extension, this recognition accepts the concept of indeterminacy, i.e., the reader's role in creating meaning leads to the decentering of any meaning. Undergirding this philosophy of indeterminacy is the claim that knowledge (and thereby truth) is socially constructed, not absolute.⁶⁴ Second, self-reflexive rhetoric requires the critic to acknowledge the implications of theory. "A new rhetorical theory needs to emphasize the inescapable social, political, religious, and ideological constraints that are operative before, during, and after reading."⁶⁵ Thus, postmodern rhetorical critics operate with an acute sense of their own social setting and the practical or political consequences of their work. Third, the critic must subject the text to critique in order to expose its use in the service of power, e.g., sexism or racism. Thus, the self-reflexive New Rhetoric should become a cultural criticism that exposes the perpetuation of "cultural norms in the name of some allegedly objective and neutral hermeneutical or rhetorical science."⁶⁶

⁶² Ibid., 159-61.

⁶³ Ibid., 163-64.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 166.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 167.

There are two problems with this appeal for a New Rhetoric. First, it is important to point out that the Collective's recovery of ancient rhetoric is selective. For example, the "crucial components" upon which the New Rhetoric builds are representative of Sophistic rhetoric, not Platonic or Aristotelian rhetoric. Thus, the New Rhetoric might be more accurately designated "The New Sophistic Rhetoric."

Second, not unlike the critique of the ancient Sophists, the Collective's appeal for a New Rhetoric suffers from their failure to articulate criteria for discerning "wrong" readings or "misreadings." They pose the crucial question: When the possibility of multiple readings is accepted, on what basis can one exclude certain readings? They also suggest that such "ways and means" exist. However, they fail to supply, even provisionally, any criteria for adjudication.⁶⁷

Despite these objections, the Collective's claim that rhetoric is the tool of ideology would hardly be contested by any rhetorical critic, past or present. Rhetoric is the means by which a speaker/writer attempts to persuade an audience in favor of her/his own view of reality (ideology), against other competing ideologies. In this regard, the Collective's appeal for a self-reflexive rhetorical analysis that engages cultural criticism is understandable. Nonetheless, this is a step beyond the rhetorical method that I will employ in my analysis of the ten lectures. I am not concerned here to offer a critique of the ideology espoused by the writer(s) of the lectures. Rather, my goal is to offer a reading of the text from a rhetorical perspective that identifies the

⁶⁷ Ibid., 176.

truth claims made by the text (e.g., the father's teaching is the path to genuine life, the "alien woman" will destroy the son) and identifies how these claims are argued.

c. The "Socio-Rhetorical Criticism" of Vernon Robbins:
Rhetoric and Methodological Pluralism)

The "Socio-Rhetorical Criticism" advanced by Vernon Dobbins is not a method per se, but an "interpretive analytics" that seeks to integrate various interpretive strategies, including the various rhetorical perspectives.⁶⁸ Robbins' primary concern is the existence of isolationist methodology in biblical studies. Consequently, he advocates an analytics that incorporates both "Socio" (social / historical) and "Rhetorical" (literary) methods. More specifically, his Socio-Rhetorical analytics pursues three objectives: 1) to correlate diverse methodologies, 2) to offer a guide for systematic reading and rereading of texts, and 3) to provide a resource for rewriting the ancient history of the church.⁶⁹

In practice, Robbins identifies five "textures" in any given text. 1) Inner-Texture. Inner-Texture refers to the words, grammar, figures of speech and other literary qualities of a text. This texture invites various literary and rhetorical methods of reading. 2) Intertexture. Intertexture refers to the relationship of the text to realities outside itself, e.g., scribal intertexture (i.e., its relationship to other texts), historical intertexture, cultural intertexture, and social intertexture. Critics with various

⁶⁸ Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1-2; and *The Tapestry*, 1-4.

⁶⁹ Robbins, *The Tapestry*, 1-17, 240-43.

interests in intertextuality as well as social and cultural anthropology work in this dimension of the text. 3) Social and Cultural Texture. Social and Cultural texture, different from social and cultural Intertexture, refers to the stance advocated in or by the text towards culture (e.g., withdrawal or participation) 4) Ideological Texture. Ideological texture includes both the ideology operating in and behind the text as well as the ideology of the interpreter. Thus, this facet of the text(s) is a source for various self-conscious ideological readings. 5) Sacred Texture. Sacred Texture refers to the religious, ethical, and communal aspects of the text. Here, various theological approaches may work to appropriate the text for the modern reader.

The primary criticism that has been raised against Socio-Rhetorical criticism is that, while Robbin's books offer a guide for systematic reading and provide another resource for rewriting the history of the early church, they have not addressed what Robbins claims is the chief goal of his analytics, namely the correlation of diverse methods.⁷⁰ His identification of five textures within a unified text suggests that the diverse methods applied to these different textures may somehow be fruitfully related to one another. However, in his own practice, he isolates these textures and methods without suggesting how they can be brought together into an interpretive whole.

Socio-Rhetorical criticism is not the method or analytic espoused by this dissertation. Nonetheless, Robbins has raised the key issue of how my critical practice relates to other rhetorical and non-rhetorical methods. This issue has already been

⁷⁰ R. Alan Culpepper raised this criticism during a meeting of the Rhetoric and the New Testament Section devoted to Robbins' books at the 1997 AAR/SBL annual meeting in San Francisco, CA.

introduced in chapter one. Methods of biblical criticism are inextricably interwoven and intergrown. Thus, my rhetorical analysis does not attempt to operate in isolation from other methods. However, unlike Robbins, it is not my objective to correlate the diverse methodological perspectives that have been brought to bear on the ten lectures, or to use the data retrieved from my analysis to write a history of the wisdom tradition in ancient Israel. Like the cultural criticism of the New Rhetoric, these are steps beyond the objectives of this dissertation. My objective is to present a new perspective on the lectures, namely that of rhetorical criticism. In order to accomplish this goal, it is necessary here to focus as narrowly as possible on the rhetoric of the lectures. Thus, this dissertation will contribute primary data for others who would use Robbin's Socio-Rhetorical analytics to synthesize the findings of various interpretive strategies applied to Proverbs 1-9.

d. The "Classical Rhetoric" of George Kennedy:
Western Rhetorical Theory and Non-Western Texts

George Kennedy, a specialist in ancient rhetoric, has become a leader in the attempt to recover ancient Western rhetoric for the purposes of biblical, especially New Testament, interpretation. Although this objective is similar to that of *The Postmodern Bible*, Kennedy differs from the Collective on the fundamental issues of truth and the relationship of rhetoric to truth. He writes,

Twentieth-century thought as seen in some of its most original philosophers, writers, and artists, as well as at the frontiers of theoretical science, points towards a conclusion that mankind cannot know reality, at least not directly or not under contemporary conditions. At most, it is argued, we can know structures, words, and formulae perhaps representative of aspects of reality. Even if an individual were to perceive reality experientially or intuitively, there

is some pessimism whether this understanding can be communicated through the media available to us to any general segment of the population. I do not share this view in its more extreme forms . . . ⁷¹

Thus, against the New Rhetoric of *The Postmodern Bible*, Kennedy's more conservative (modern) method may be described as Classical or Aristotelian Rhetoric.

In *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*, Kennedy works out the details of utilizing Classical Rhetorical theory for the interpretation of the New Testament. In this book, Kennedy associates his rhetorics with Muilenburg. The chief difference between the two, according to Kennedy, is that whereas Muilenburg and his students applied their rhetorical method to Old Testament texts, his goal is to present an outline of rhetorics for the study of the New Testament.⁷² Despite this claim, Kennedy's method greatly differs from Muilenburg's in its heavy reliance upon ancient Western rhetorical theory. The important theoretical concepts underlying Kennedy's rhetorics are drawn from Aristotle and other ancients.⁷³ As a result, his rhetorical interpretation is more concerned with rhetoric as suasion than rhetoric as an elucidation of compositional features.

Kennedy advocates a rhetorical practice that incorporates the knowledge of ancient rhetorical theory in four circular steps of exegesis. First, it is necessary to

⁷¹ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 157. As might be expected, the Collective of the Postmodern Bible is highly critical of Kennedy's position. According to the Collective (*The Postmodern Bible*, 163), Kennedy is a striking example of a critic who overlooks the role of the reader in the creation of meaning.

⁷² Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 3-4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 12.

determine the boundaries of the rhetorical unit and its setting within larger rhetorical units, including the rhetoric of the entire book. Kennedy claims that this delimitation corresponds to the isolation of a pericope by form critics. However, apart from typical form critical methods, Kennedy suggests seeking signs of opening and closure such as proem and epilogue, analytical categories drawn from rhetorical theory.

Second, the interpreter should attempt to define the rhetorical situation of the unit. Again, Kennedy claims that this step "roughly corresponds to the *Sitz im Leben* of form criticism."⁷⁴ This correspondence is indeed "rough." The rhetorical situation Kennedy seeks to define is much more specific than the *Sitz im Leben* pursued by the form critic. Following Bitzer, Kennedy defines the rhetorical situation as a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations that presents some situation in which an individual (or group) is called upon to make some response. Further, "the response made is conditioned by the situation and in turn has some possibility of affecting the situation or what follows from it."⁷⁵ Within this rhetorical situation, the speaker usually faces one major rhetorical problem, i.e., one major obstacle that must be overcome in order to persuade the audience.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁷⁶ For example, Kennedy (ibid., 36) explains that the audience may already be "prejudiced against him and not disposed to listen to anything he may say; or the audience may not perceive him as having the authority to advance the claims he wishes to make; or what he wishes to say is very complicated and thus hard to follow, or so totally different from what the audience expects that they will not immediately entertain the possibility of its truth." In the ten lectures, the rhetor will confront rhetorical problems such as the rhetoric of the sinners and alien woman, the lackadaisical attitude of the son toward his teaching, and the apparent success of those who reject his teaching.

Both the rhetorical situation and the rhetorical problem addressed by a text may be uncovered by insights drawn from classical theory. For example, the problem is often especially visible at the beginning of a discourse, in the proem, proposition and/or the beginning of the proof. Consequently, it is of paramount importance that the critic properly identify these rhetorical elements and discern how they work together to address one or more problems. Further, recognizing the species of rhetoric (e.g., judicial, epideictic, and deliberative)⁷⁷ may indicate the type of situation or problem addressed by the speaker. For example, identifying Paul's letter to the Galatians as deliberative rhetoric enables Kennedy to recognize that this letter looks to the immediate future, not to the judgment of the past. The question is not whether Paul had been right, but what the Galatians were going to believe and do in the immediate future.⁷⁸

Third, the critic should attempt to discern the arrangement of the text, i.e., its subdivisions, the persuasive effect of these units, and how they work together. This discernment may be accomplished by a close reading of the text that analyzes the argument of the text, including its assumptions, topics, formal features, and stylistic

⁷⁷ Deliberative rhetoric attempts to persuade an audience to adopt an attitude or make a decision regarding actions in the future. Judicial rhetoric seeks to persuade the audience to make a judgment regarding a past event. Epideictic persuades an audience to hold or confirm some view in the present, e.g., speeches of blame or praise.

⁷⁸ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 36-37, 144-52. Kennedy advances this argument against Hans Dieter Betz's identification of Galatians as judicial rhetoric. My point is not the correctness of Kennedy's position, but the significance of his identification of rhetorical species in his reading of Galatians.

devices. Such a close reading is not to be confused with stylistics. Rather, this analysis seeks to define the function of these devices within the argument as a whole.

Fourth, the process of rhetorical analysis should conclude with review and synthesis. Does the text successfully meet the rhetorical situation and problem? Is the analysis of details consistent with the argument of the unit as a whole? These questions can help critics evaluate their own interpretations. Further, at this stage the critic may perform a "creative act" of looking beyond the target text to the human condition and to religious or philosophical truth.⁷⁹

My own rhetorical method is quite similar to Kennedy's approach (see below). Like Kennedy, I rely heavily upon ancient Western rhetorical theory for analytical tools. However, Kennedy's *Classical Rhetoric* raises a fundamental issue for this dissertation. How appropriate is it to use ancient Western theory in the interpretation of a non-Western text, namely Proverbs 1-9?

In addition to his consideration of this problem as it relates to the study of the New Testament,⁸⁰ Kennedy has addressed the relevance of classical rhetoric for the study of non-Western texts, including the Old Testament, in his most recent book, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction*. Here, he advances several arguments in defense of comparative rhetoric.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 38.

⁸⁰ Kennedy argues (ibid., 8-12) that the process of Hellenization, including rhetorical education, was widespread by the time of New Testament. Although the writers of the New Testament may not have had formal rhetorical training, it would have been extremely difficult for them to escape an awareness of rhetoric as it was practiced in the culture around them. Thus, Kennedy justifies the study of the New Testament by means of Classical Rhetoric on historical - cultural grounds.

First, Kennedy asserts that rhetoric is a universal phenomenon. People in every culture and society seek to persuade others to act or refrain from acting, or to accept, maintain, or discard some belief. The essence of this rhetoric, according to Kennedy, is mental or emotional energy that arises from the basic instinct of self-preservation.⁸¹ It is a natural phenomenon which exists in all life-forms that can give signals.⁸²

Rhetoric, in the most general sense, may thus be identified with the energy inherent in an utterance (or an artistic representation): the mental or emotional energy that impels the speaker to expression, the energy level coded in the message, and the energy received by the recipient who then uses mental energy in decoding and perhaps acting on the message.⁸³

This is a bedrock definition that not only provides a foundation for the study of more complex manifestations of rhetoric among humans,⁸⁴ but expands the compass of rhetorical study to the "rhetoric" of social animals such as elk, monkeys, bees, and birds.⁸⁵ The implication is that all communication carries some rhetorical energy; "it may be slight, some phrase of conventional etiquette, but there is no zero-degree rhetoric."⁸⁶ Thus, for this dissertation, the question is not whether rhetoric exists in the

⁸¹ Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 216. Consequently, Kennedy claims that "the basic function of rhetorical communication is defensive and conservative."

⁸² Ibid., 3-4.

⁸³ Ibid., 4-5.

⁸⁴ Kennedy (Ibid., 215) explains, "Rhetorical energy in its simplest form is conveyed by volume, pitch, or repetition; more complex forms of rhetorical energy include logical reasons, pathetic narratives, metaphor and other tropes, or lively figures of speech such as apostrophe, rhetorical question, or simile."

⁸⁵ Ibid., 11-37.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 215.

ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9, but the nature, development, and expression of this rhetoric and how the interpreter may best engage this dimension of the text.⁸⁷

Second, Kennedy observes that comparative or cross-cultural study has often proved fruitful in other disciplines. Such approaches often “reseat features of some object of study that may not be immediately evident in its own context.”⁸⁸ Here, then, the conceptual terminology of Western rhetoric offers a valuable heuristic tool for identifying and discussing specific rhetorical/textual features of the ten lectures that might otherwise be overlooked. For example, I will argue in chapters 3-5 that despite their similarities, the ten lectures may be classified rhetorically into three distinct groups on the basis of their slightly differing propositions and their corresponding rhetorical strategies, insights revealed by the utilization of Western theory.

Third, within human history, metarhetoric, or a theory of rhetoric, has evolved in conjunction with other aspects of some cultures. It seems clear that the prophets and sages of ancient Israel were concerned with matters of persuasion. Yet, according to Kennedy, these intellectual leaders did not conceptualize their rhetoric or develop a metarhetoric.⁸⁹ The conceptualization of something analogous to Western rhetoric did develop in a few non-Western literate cultures, e.g., India, China, and Egypt. However, these systems are not as fully developed as the rhetoric derived from the

⁸⁷ Although Kennedy's bed rock definition of rhetoric ("mental or emotional energy") is applicable to the ten lectures, these lectures are among the more complex manifestations of such rhetorical energy. Thus, my analysis will not focus on the "energy" of the father's rhetoric per se, but the artful and complex way in which the father persuades the son.

⁸⁸ Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 1.

⁸⁹ *Classical Rhetoric*, 120-21.

ancient West and their terminology is unfamiliar to most Western readers.⁹⁰ Thus, if one is to analyze the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9 from a rhetorical perspective, the most complete and readily available system for a scholar trained in the West is that from the ancient West.

There are two potential dangers in the use of Western rhetorical theory for the interpretation of Proverbs 1-9. On the one hand, a primary danger lies in imposing Western assumptions about rhetoric on a non-Western culture. Like Kennedy, I am well aware of this pitfall.⁹¹ It is not my intention to impose Western assumptions upon ancient Israel. Because of the universal nature of rhetoric, many of Israel's practices may be similar or identical to that of the West.⁹² Yet, careful use of Western theory may also reveal distinctive rhetorical practices in ancient Israel.⁹³ My aim is

⁹⁰ *Comparative Rhetoric*, 3,5.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁹² Kennedy points out several similarities in ancient Western and non-Western rhetoric. 1) Deliberative rhetoric is a universal practice (*ibid.*, 220). 2) The most common form of persuasion is inductive argumentation by use of examples (225). 3) There is a universal recognition and use of rhetorical topoi, both universal (e.g., from greater to lesser, part of the whole), and specific (225). 4) Sophistry is a universal rhetorical phenomenon (225). This is not to say that Sophistry has emerged in every ancient society, but that the factors that lead to the emergence of Sophistry are identical across all cultures (e.g., high levels of literacy, sophistication, competing philosophical schools).

⁹³ According to Kennedy, there are some clear differences between Western and non-Western rhetoric. 1) Non-western rhetoric lacks full development of judicial rhetoric because of its lack of Western judicial processes (*ibid.*, 220). 2) Most non-Western rhetoric views composition as an organic whole, against the Western teaching of composition as a series of discrete steps (219-220). 3) "In the Western tradition generally, rhetoric was identified as a distinct academic discipline that could be taught, studied and practiced separately from political and moral philosophy" (218). In ancient non-Western cultures there were also technical writings that discussed the techniques of persuasion, "but always as a part of political or ethical thought" (219).

not to force Western ideas upon the ten lectures, but to utilize Western theory in a responsible fashion to achieve a greater understanding of Israel's rhetorical practices.

On the other hand, because of its own cultural specificity, Western rhetorical theory may not be sensitive to certain aspects of non-Western rhetoric. For example, Kennedy observes a significant difference between the goals of Western and non-Western deliberative rhetoric. In the democracies of Greece and Rome, deliberative rhetoric typically sought only a majority agreement. Because of this aim, rhetors could ignore the extreme fringes of the audience, attack the opposition, and be unconcerned for the reconciliation of those holding opposing opinions. All that mattered was the acquisition of a majority. In non-Western and non-democratic cultures, deliberative rhetoric most often seeks consensus. Consequently, non-Western deliberative rhetoric tends to be gentle and conciliatory toward Opposing opinions.⁹⁴ Another example of a Western theoretical lacuna due to cultural specificity concerns the concept of *ethos*, i.e., the rhetor's credibility or right to speak (See below). Western rhetorical theory of *ethos* focuses primarily on how *ethos* may be developed within a speech and neglects a significant source of rhetorical *ethos* in non-Western cultures, namely, the position or standing of the speaker in the community.⁹⁵

Regrettably, the potential failure of not seeing the rhetorical distinctiveness of Israel because of glasses tinted by Western theory cannot be avoided. This is a constant problem in the application of any Western method to the interpretation of the

⁹⁴ Ibid., 219-22.

⁹⁵ E.g., see my analysis of the *ethos* of Prov 4:20-27.

Old Testament. However, this danger can be mitigated by an awareness of the problem and giving careful attention not only to what is similar, but to what is different from or unexplained by Western theory.⁹⁶ In my opinion, the potential benefits of utilizing Western rhetoric for the interpretation of the ten lectures in Proverbs 1-9 outweigh these dangers and inadequacies.

4. Summary

This section has begun to define my practice of rhetorical analysis vis-a-vis contemporary biblical rhetorics and the issues they raise. Against Muilenburg, I define rhetoric as persuasive discourse and rhetorical analysis as focused attention on the suasive dimensions of the text. With the New Rhetoric proposed by *The Postmodern Bible*, my method is also largely a rediscovery of ancient Western rhetoric, although more Aristotelian than Sophistic. I also concur with the Collective that rhetoric is the tool of ideology. But, counter to their practice, cultural criticism is not the objective of my dissertation. With Vernon Robbins, my analysis does not exclude insights from other methodological perspectives. However, again, it is not my concern to coordinate the diverse methods that have been brought to the interpretation of the lectures. And finally, like Kennedy, my rhetorical analysis utilizes ancient Western rhetoric as a tool for understanding the suasive dimensions of the ten lectures. It is to the specific procedures of my analysis that I now turn.

⁹⁶ For example, Kennedy (*Comparative Rhetoric*, 216-17) has drawn attention to the foundational role of formal language (e.g., poetry, archaism) in rhetoric. The ancient West conceptualized this device as an element of style. However, because of its importance in the non-West, Kennedy suggests (228) that a general or universal theory of style must begin with the concept of formal language.

A Rhetorical Method for Analysis of the Ten Lectures

This study will utilize tools developed by and from ancient Western rhetoric for understanding the 10 lectures of Proverbs 1-9 as attempt by an author/speaker (the "father") to persuade an audience (the "son[s]"). Having dealt With the issue of definition and the validity of utilizing Western rhetorical theory; for the interpretation of non-Western texts, I will now articulate the specific procedure of rhetorical analysis that I will follow in the next three chapters. This analysis will progress in four overlapping steps: Text and Translation, The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit, Analysis of the Artistic Proofs, and Summary.

1. Text and Translation

The rhetorical analysis of each of the ten lectures will begin with my own translation of the text, including notes that attend to the fundamental issues of textual and grammatical criticism. Although my primary interest is neither text critical nor grammatical, it is necessary to establish the text and clarify any grammatical ambiguities in order to lay a foundation for subsequent analysis. The uncertain value

of other textual witnesses to Proverbs 1-9 causes me to give preference to the MT.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, I will consider variants on an individual basis.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

This second exercise roughly corresponds to the first step in Kennedy's rhetorical method. Here, I will draw on both form critical and rhetorical insights to determine the boundaries of the rhetorical unit to be studied. However, against Kennedy, it is not my immediate interest to situate these discrete rhetorical units within the rhetoric of larger units, i.e., Proverbs 1-9 or the book of Proverbs. This delimitation follows a long standing hypothesis regarding the compositional history of Proverbs 1-9, namely, that the original core of these chapters was the collection of ten lectures to which the interludes were later added (see pp. 1, 9, 292-294). Thus, my primary objective is the analysis of the individual speeches as individual speeches and

⁹⁷ The manuscripts from Qumran offer almost no assistance for the study of the ten lectures. Two fragments of Proverbs have been recovered from cave 4 (4Q102 and 4Q103), but not yet published. More, these fragments attest to only one verse from the lectures (4Q102; 2:1).

The LXX is of greater, albeit, limited assistance. According to J. Cook (*The Septuagint of Proverbs: Jewish and/or Hellenistic Proverbs?* VTSup 69 [Leiden: Brill: 1997], 1), in addition to smaller differences (e.g., the variation of subject/object, plural instead of singular) the LXX Proverbs differs from the MT in many respects, e.g., minuses, pluses, chapters placed in a different order, and verses within chapters in a different order. The nature or origin of these differences is uncertain. Cook (2) summarizes the problem, "If they [the differences] are ascribed to the translator, then this version of the book of Proverbs will be less useful for the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. However, the contrary will apply if the deviations could be retroverted to different Hebrew *Vorlagen*." After careful study of Proverbs 1, 2, 6, 8, and 9, Cook concludes that the greatest number of differences are due to the creativeness of the translator. Thus, "the Septuagint version of Proverbs should be treated with the utmost caution when utilized for text-critical purposes" (334). See also E. Tov, "Recensional Differences between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint of Proverbs," in *Of Scribes and Scrolls, Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins Presented to J. Strugnell*, College Theology Society Resources in Religion 5, eds. H.W. Attridge, et al. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 43-56.

the comparison of the rhetoric of these speeches. Within this task, the larger context of Proverbs 1-9 is not unimportant, but secondary to the task at hand.⁹⁸ Once the individual analyses are completed, I will propose a redactional hypothesis for the relationship of these lectures.

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever.”⁹⁹ For Aristotle, such discovery primarily involved *invention*: planning a discourse and the arguments to be used in it. Such invention may be based on *external proofs* (inartistic), which the speaker utilizes, but does not invent (e.g., the evidence of witnesses, documents, laws), or *artistic proofs*, which are constructed by the “art” of the rhetor. Aristotle claimed that there are three and only three kinds of artistic proof:

The first depends upon the moral character of the speaker, the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind, the third, upon the speech itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove.¹⁰⁰

According to Kennedy, these three types of proof, typically designated as *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, are universal features of rhetoric.¹⁰¹ Further, these categories encompass the basic dimensions of a literary work: the author, the audience, and the

⁹⁸ The interpretation of the lectures within the context of Proverbs 1-9 is necessary only if the focus of the interpretation is Proverbs 1-9 as a whole. My dissertation is concerned with the stage of literary development prior to the addition of the interlude3.

⁹⁹ Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, 15.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰¹ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 15.

text.¹⁰² Although I will not ignore external proofs, the use of external proofs is rare in the lectures. Consequently, my analysis concentrates on the artistic proofs in the following order.

a. Logos

Logos refers to the logical or rational development of the argument in the discourse. According to Aristotle, logical arguments may exist in two forms: inductive or deductive. Inductive reasoning utilizes a series of examples to draw a general conclusion. Deductive reasoning utilizes *enthymemes*. Rhetorical enthymemes most often take the form of a statement generally accepted to be true or probable by the audience and a conclusion based on the statement.¹⁰³ Again, in Classical theory, both

¹⁰² Yehoshua Gitay, "Rhetorical Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1993), 136.

¹⁰³ The difference between an enthymeme and an epicheireme is debated. For example, Kennedy has distinguished these terms in different and contradictory ways. Most recently he has claimed (*New Testament Interpretation*, 16-17) that the epicheireme employs a full statement of major premise, minor premise, and conclusion, while the enthymeme assumes or suppresses one of these parts, i.e., the part already accepted by the audience. This is a reversal of his earlier claim (*The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, 97-98): "Later writers, misunderstanding Aristotle, sometimes regarded such suppression as the factor in distinguishing an enthymeme from a syllogism and adopted the term epicheireme to refer to a rhetorical syllogism in full form. In the last hundred years there has been a general return to the Aristotelian definition. If the premises are scientific, demonstrable, known to be absolutely true, the argument is a syllogism. If they are only true for the most part, or usually true, the argument is an enthymeme." For the purposes of this dissertation, I adopt Kennedy's most recent definition of enthymeme (suppression of one of the premises) and epicheireme (full statement of major premise, minor premise, and conclusion).

inductive and deductive arguments are drawn from *topics* or places a rhetor may look for material to develop his/her argument.¹⁰⁴

My analysis of the logos of the lectures will also include the element of arrangement. Typically, in the theory of classical rhetoric, arrangement (i.e., the composition of a unified structure) follows logos as the second of the five canons of speech composition and delivery.¹⁰⁵ Yet Kennedy observes that, in practice, classical rhetoricians usually included arrangement in their discussion of invention.¹⁰⁶ So, here, I will consider this element in its role as a contributor to the development of the logos or logical argument of the lecture.

Each analysis, then, will begin with an identification of the arrangement of the lecture utilizing concepts from Western rhetorical theory, e.g., *Proem*, *proposition*, *proof* and *epilogue*. These categories, I will demonstrate, aptly, describe the parts of the lectures. For example, each lecture begins with the proem “my son” or “sons” (e.g., 1:8, 3:1, 4:1) and asserts a proposition (e.g., 1:8-9, 3:1-2, 4:1-2) that is elaborated and defended in a section of proof (e.g., 1:10-18, 3:3-10, 4:3-9). Most lectures also include an identifiable epilogue (e.g., 1:19, 2:20-22, 3:11-12). The proper identification of these elements is important for understanding the unique rhetoric of each lecture. For example, the failure to recognize the epilogue of the first lecture (1:19) has led many scholars to miss the hyperbolic nature of the rhetoric. In the

¹⁰⁴ See Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, 100-02; and *New Testament Interpretation*, 20-21.

¹⁰⁵ The other canons are style, memory, and delivery.

¹⁰⁶ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 23.

same way, the failure to identify and recognize the controlling function of the proposition in each lecture has led to a lack of appreciation for the differing aim(s), proofs, and coherence of each lecture: Thus, in this section, I will identify the constituent parts of the rhetoric and seek to understand their role in the logical or rational development of the rhetor's argument.

b. Ethos

The second artistic proof is ethos. Kennedy describes the concept of ethos in Classical theory as

the credibility that the author or speaker is able to establish in his work. The audience is induced to trust what he says because they trust him, as a good man or an expert on the subject. In Aristotelian theory ethos is something entirely internal to a speech, but in practice the authority which the speaker brings to the occasion is an important factor . . . ¹⁰⁷

Frequently, in the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9, there is special concern for developing the authority or the moral character of the speaker (the father), against the ethos of the opposition, e.g., the wicked men (1:8-19, 2:12-15) and the seductive woman (2:16-19). Here, I will identify the devices that develop the ethos of the speaker and their function in the rhetoric. In other lectures, there is an apparent lack of concern or need to develop the speaker's ethos (e.g., 3:1-12, 21-35). Again, I will identify the devices that are present, but I will also explore the reason(s) for the relative lack of concern for the speaker's ethos.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 15.

c. Pathos

The third artistic proof is pathos. Pathos regards the emotions of the audience and how rhetors may stimulate or manipulate their emotions, e.g., anger, fear, or love, to achieve their rhetorical goals. Typically, pathetic appeals are concentrated in the epilogue or final stages of a speech. However, rhetorical analysis must not restrict pathos to the final appeal, but be sensitive to pathetic proofs that are developed or employed throughout the speech. Here, several helpful questions will guide my analysis: What persuasive devices engage the emotions or sentiments of the audience? Does the text primarily threaten (the pathos of fear), promise (the pathos of pleasure), or both? Is there extensive use of pathetic appeals or does the rhetor rely on the logic of the argument (logos) or his own authority (ethos) to accomplish his goals?

d. Summary & Conclusions

The completion of the preceding analysis should provide the necessary data for understanding various aspects of the rhetoric of each lecture. Thus, my analysis of each lecture will conclude with a synthesis of my findings, including the rhetorical situation of the lecture, the rhetorical problem addressed by the speaker, and the strategy (i.e., the convergence of logos, ethos, and pathos) employed by the speaker to confront and remedy the problem.

Undergirding my conclusions, as well as my analyses, is the a priori assumption that the speaker/writer was of at least minimal rhetorical competency. In other words, I assume that each speaker/writer spoke in a self-conscious attempt to persuade an audience, designed each speech for suasion, and expected that each lecture

had at least a reasonable chance at success. It is my judgment that this initial assumption is confirmed by the rhetorical analysis of the lectures. Thus, throughout this dissertation, I will support this thesis with evidence of careful rhetorical composition and artistry in the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9.

Summary: Rhetorical Criticism

This chapter has established the theoretical foundations and the practical procedures for my rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9. My methodology does not exist in a vacuum. Consequently, I have sought to define my practice of rhetorical interpretation vis-a-vis both ancient and contemporary rhetorics. Rhetorical criticism has had a long history in the interpretation of biblical texts. However, as my survey has demonstrated, this history has not been static. Primarily due to the influence of modernism, rhetoric suffered a sharp decline in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Conversely, the surge of postmodernism in more recent years has reawakened interest in rhetoric.

Like its ancient counter-part, contemporary rhetorics includes a plurality of both harmonious and competing theories. Each of these contemporary practices raises or emphasizes important critical issues in the discussion of rhetoric. Thus, in assessing these methods, I have been able to address the underpinnings of my own method. Against Muilenburg's rhetoric, I define rhetorical criticism as the systematic analysis of the suasive features of a discourse. With *The Postmodern Bible's New Rhetoric*, I agree that rhetoric is the tool of ideology. However, their practice of rhetorical criticism as cultural criticism is not the goal of this dissertation. My rhetorical theory

also fits within the interpretive analytics proposed by Vernon Robbins, primarily as an analysis of one dimension of the Inner Texture of Proverbs 1-9. Yet, against Robbins, my aim does not include the correlation of diverse methodology or rewriting the history of the wisdom tradition in ancient Israel.

The contemporary rhetorician to which I am most indebted is George Kennedy. Although our practices differ slightly, I, like Kennedy, rely heavily on the conceptual theory and terminology of ancient Western rhetoric. Thus, my rhetorical analysis will concentrate on the artistic proofs of the ten lectures as a means of understanding the rhetorical situation, the rhetorical problem, and the rhetor's strategy for resolving this problem. With this definition in hand and having already situated this dissertation within the interpretive web of Proverbs 1-9, I now turn my analysis of the ten lectures.

Chapter Three

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF GROUP I: THE CALLS TO APPRENTICESHIP

The ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9 appear to assert similar propositions. They address a "son" or "sons," urge the son(s) to listen, not forget, or guard the father's teaching, and affirm the value of this teaching.¹ However, a curious diversity exists within this similarity that scholars have yet to explain adequately.² Nineteen different Hebrew verbs occur in the initial appeals of the lectures (e.g., listen, pay attention, guard).³ While many of these terms are synonymous, or near synonymous, others suggest varied emphases in the father's rhetorical objectives. The father also affirms the value of his teaching in different ways. At times, he claims that his teaching is the key to a successful life (e.g., 3:1-2, 3:21-22). At other times, he affirms his teaching by promising that it will rescue the son from the seductive rhetoric of the alien woman

¹ Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 34.

² Whybray (*Proverbs*, NCB [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994], 23-24) writes: "It is remarkable - *and no satisfactory explanation has been found for this* - that although in every case the language used is similar, it is never quite identical: a remarkable number of synonyms is used, and often the same words occur in slightly different combinations." (italics mine)

³ שמע (1:8, 4:1,10), נטש (1:8, 6:20), לקח (2:1), צפן (2:1, 7:1), קשב (2:2, 4:1,20, 5:1), נטה (2:2, 4:20, 5:1), קרא (2:3, 7:4), נתן (2:3), בקש (2:4), חפש (2:4), שכח (3:1, 4:5), נצר (3:1, 21, 5:2, 6:20), לוי (3:21, 4:21), עזב (4:2), קשר (6:21, 7:3), ענד (6:21), כתב (7:3), אמר (7:4), שמר (4:21, 5:2, 7:1, 2)

(e.g., 6:20-24, 7:1-5). Further, there is remarkable variety in the rhetorical strategies each lecture employs to argue for its proposition (see below).

This dissertation will address the diversity within the ten lectures and thus breach the present scholarly impasse by the use of rhetorical criticism. It is my thesis that the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9 may be classified into three groups or subsets on the basis of their rhetoric, namely their differing propositions and rhetorical strategies. Against the conclusion of form critics, I maintain that the various combinations of verbs in the propositions do not make the same appeal.⁴ Rather, analysis of these verbs reveals three distinct groups: 1) verbs which urge the son to listen to the father and receive his wisdom (נָטָה, לָקַח, נָטַשׁ, שָׁמַע), or to actively pursue the acquisition of the father's wisdom (בָּקַשׁ, נָתַן, קָרָא, צָפַן), 2) verbs which emphasize not forgetting (שָׁכַח), abandoning (עָזַב), or losing (לָוִי) the father's instruction, and 3) verbs which advise the son to guard (נָצַר) or keep watch over (שָׁמַר) the father's teaching.

The three groups of verbs correspond to three different types of lectures (see table 1). One group of lectures (1:8-19, 2:1-22, 4:1-9, 4:10-19) utilizes the first group of verbs to urge the son to listen to the father's instruction and actively pursue wisdom. Significantly, these lectures do little more than appeal for apprenticeship. The actual teaching of the father is not explicated. Another group of lectures (3:1-12, 3:22-35, 4:20-27) employs the second group of verbs that emphasize not forgetting

⁴ For example, Whybray (*Proverbs*, 23) claims: "The varieties of wording seem endless; yet the basic meaning is always the same."

Table 1.--Concurrence of Verbs in the Propositions of the Ten Lectures

Lecture & Proposition	Listen/Pursue Wisdom	Do not forget or lose sight	Guard, Keep Watch, Bind, Tie
1 (1:8)	נטש, שמע		
2 (2:1-4)	נטה, קשב, צקן, לקח, חפש, בקש, נתן, קרא		
5 (4:1-2)	שמע, קשב	עזב	
6 (4:10)	שמע		
3:(3:1)		שכח	נצר
4 (3:21)		לז	נצר
7 (4:20-21)	נטה, קשב		שמר, נצר
8 (5:1-2)	נטש		ענד, קשר, נצר
9 (6:20-21)	נטש		ענד, קשר, נצר
10 (7:1-4)	קרא, צפן		שמר (2x), כתב, קשר

the father's teaching (with incidental use of the third and first groups).⁵ These lectures do explicate the teaching of the father through a series of concise imperatives on a variety of subjects. Finally, a third subset of lectures (5:1-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27) takes up the group of verbs that stress the importance of guarding and watching over the father's instruction. This appeal corresponds to the longest lectures (with the exception of 2:1-22), which provide sustained teaching on a single topic, namely, the danger of the strange/foreign woman. Thus, in each lecture, the nuance of the opening appeal

⁵ There is some overlap in these categories. For example, verbs which denote an appeal to listen occur in all three types of lectures (e.g., 4:20-21, 5:1-2; see Table 1). Nonetheless, each lecture places emphasis on one of these three categories.

corresponds to the content of the lecture.⁶ Form critics have overlooked this correlation.

In this and the next two chapters, I will test the validity of this rhetorical classification of the lectures into three subsets. In this chapter, I will examine the rhetoric of the first group or type of lecture, namely the four lectures that urge the son to listen to the father and actively pursue wisdom, but that do not explicate the actual teaching of the father. Chapters four and five will offer analysis of the second and third groups, respectively.

Proverbs 1:8-19

1. Text and Translation

- 1:8 Listen, my son, to the instruction of your father
and do not disregard the teaching of your mother;
1:9 because they are a garland of favor for your head,
and necklaces for your neck.
1:10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.
1:11 If they say, "Come with us,
let us lie in ambush⁷ for blood;
let us lurk for an innocent person without cause;⁸

⁶ Paul Overland ("Literary Structure in Proverbs 1-9," 169-170), in his analysis of 1:8-19, makes a similar claim regarding the summons of verse 8-9: "This link [related term repetition involving wealth] between an instructional block (B) and a summons block (A) is important because it shows the potential for initiating a theme even within the brief, often formulaic confines of a summons . . . The summons is capable of containing a carefully designed germ of the topic to be developed in ensuing instruction."

⁷ The imperfect verbs of verses 11c-13 are juxtaposed asyndetically to the imperative of verse 11a (לָכֶם אִתָּנוּ, "come with us"). Thus, these verbs are best read as a chain of cohortatives that signify the purpose of the imperative (see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 577).

⁸ Some scholars offer a series of emendations for this verse. For example, W.O.E. Oesterley (*The Book of Proverbs*, Westminster Commentaries [London: Methuen, 1929], 8)

- 1:12 let us swallow them up like Sheol [swallows]⁹ the living,
 [Let us swallow them] whole like those going down to the pit;
 1:13 let us find every precious valuable;
 let us fill our houses with plunder.
 1:14 Cast¹⁰ your lot with us;
 let there be one bag for all of us."
 1:15 My son, do not walk in the road with them,
 restrain your foot from their paths.
 1:16¹¹ "Their feet run to evil,
 and they hurry to shed blood."¹²

proposes לְתָם ("for the perfect [man]") instead of לְדָם ("for blood," v. 1 lb, cf v. 16), and חֶרֶם ("net") instead of חֵנָם ("without cause," v. 11c). These revisions exemplify the attempt to read the speech of the wicked men as a real speech, rather than a hyperbolic rhetorical device created by the rhetor.

⁹ Brackets [] indicate words elided by the speaker/writer but provided in my translation.

¹⁰ Following the LXX and the context (the previous imperative [v. 1 lb] and cohortatives [vv. 11c-13]), the MT 2nd masculine singular (תִּפֹּל) is best read as an imperative "cast" or "you should cast" (so the NIV, NRSV, and NJV). Consequently, the second verb of this verse (יִהְיֶה) is read as a jussive ("let there be").

¹¹ This verse is nearly identical to Isa 59:7 (MT). It differs in only two respects: 1) the plene spelling of תִּפֹּל (תִּפֹּל in Isaiah), and 2) the omission of נָקִי ("innocent"). This close verbal similarity suggests that one of these texts is quoting from the other, or both are citing a common source.

Because this verse is lacking in Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus and minuscule mss. of Proverbs, many scholars view it as a gloss from Isaiah (e.g., Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 39 note 3; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 9). Five arguments may be advanced against this position. 1) Other reliable manuscripts, e.g., Alexandrinus and MT, do include this verse. 2) If the lectures of Proverbs 1-9 are dated in the late Post-exilic era (Baumann, et al.) and attributed to a social group familiar with Israel's written traditions (Harris, et al.), it is plausible that a citation from Isaiah could be an integral part of the speech. 3) Both verses 16 and 17 are citations offered by the writer/speaker in support of the proposition in verse 15. 4) Verse 16 has close verbal links to verse 15: "your foot" (v. 15) // "their feet" (v. 16), "road . . . paths" (v. 15) // the activities of running and hurrying (v. 16) -- all images of travel or movement. 5) The conclusion of verse 18, "so they lie in ambush for their own blood," depends on verse 16 "they hurry to shed blood" (as well as verse 11). Without verse 16, it is difficult to follow the argumentation of verses 15-18. On the basis of this evidence, my analysis recognizes verse 16 as a citation drawn by the rhetor either from Isaiah or a source also used by Isaiah, not a later editorial gloss.

¹² Both citations (verses 16-17) are introduced in Hebrew by the particle כִּי. I have translated this particle by using quotation marks to denote citation.

- 1:17 "Vainly the net is spread out¹³
in the plain sight of any bird."
1:18 But they lie in ambush for their own blood;
they lurk for their own lives.
1:19 Thus are the ways¹⁴ of all who gain an unjust gain;
it will take away the life of its owner.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

Formal and thematic features create clear borders in this rhetorical unit. The beginning of the unit is demarcated by 1) the conclusion of the prologue with the motto of 1:7 ("The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise instruction"), 2) the shift from sentence literature, in verse 7, to the instruction form, in

¹³ There is some difficulty in reading מְזֹרֶה. In the MT, this word is pointed as a D passive participle of זָרַה ("to spread"). Driver ("Problems in the Hebrew Text of Proverbs," Bib 32 [1951]: 173) proposes repointing מְזֹרֶה as a G passive participle (מְזַרֵּה) from the root מָזַר ("to close, tighten"), or as a Hophal participle (מְזֹרֶה) from זָרַר ("to draw tight"). Both emendations suggest the translation "vainly the net is closed." D.W. Thomas ("Textual and Philological Notes on Some Passages in the Book of Proverbs," VTSup 3 [1955]: 281-82), on the basis of the Arabic root *ḏr'* ("winnow, throw, scatter"), claims that מְזֹרֶה refers to the practice of sprinkling grain on a net as bait. Thus, even though the birds see the net, their compulsive desire for the grain causes them to ignore the obvious danger, light on the net, and be captured (see also McKane, *Proverbs*, OTL [London: SCM Press, 1970], 271). Both Driver's repointing, which lacks textual support, and Thomas' use of Arabic are unnecessary. My translation maintains the MT and the standard Hebrew meaning of מְזֹרֶה. On the rhetorical function of this citation in the lecture, see my analysis below.

¹⁴ Following the MT אַרְחוֹת, plural of אֶרֶץ (stretch [of path], ground, behavior, way). Toy (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, ICC [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899], 20) suggests the reading אֶחָרִית (end, outcome), based on the context, especially verse 18 in the LXX. Many scholars accept this emendation (e.g., Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 39; R.B.Y. Scott, *Proverbs/Ecclesiastes*, AB, vol. 18 [New York: Doubleday, 1965], 34). However, against this emendation: 1) verse 19 of the LXX follows the MT, 2) אֶרֶץ picks up on the warning of verse 15 about the "road" (דֶּרֶךְ) and the "path" (נִתְיָב) of the sinners, and 3) the emendation fails to recognize the function of אֶרֶץ, as key word throughout the lectures (2:8, 13, 15, 19, 20, 3:6, 4:14, 18, 5:6).

verses 8ff.,¹⁵ 3) the address "hear, my son" (שְׁמַע בְּנִי; 1:8), and 4) the utilization of this address to introduce a sustained warning about the "sinners" (1:10-19). The end of the unit is distinguished by 1) the summary conclusion of verse 19 (introduced by כִּי), and 2) the beginning of the speech by personified wisdom in verse 20.¹⁶

One problematic aspect of the lecture's integrity is the occurrence of the vocative בְּנִי ("my son") in the body of the lecture (v. 10, אִם-יִפְתּוּךָ, and v. 15, בְּנִי אֶל-תִּלְךָ). In Proverbs 1-9, typically, the vocative בְּנִי is a proem or initial address and thereby a primary indicator of the beginning of a new rhetorical unit.¹⁷ Thus, it is possible to confuse "my son" in verses 10 and 15 as demarcating the beginning of new or distinct rhetorical units.¹⁸

Although the vocative בְּנִי often marks a new rhetorical unit in Proverbs 1-9, it also occurs within the body of four lectures, where it does not denote the beginning of a new speech.¹⁹ The primary distinction between these two usages is that in the proems, the vocative בְּנִי is used in connection with appeals to listen, pay attention, not forget, etc., but in the bodies of these lectures, the vocative בְּנִי is used in combination with more specific appeals (e.g., "My son, if sinners entice you" [1:10], "My son, do

¹⁵ Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 9.

¹⁶ For an extensive defense of the literary unity of 1:8-19 see Overland, "Literary Structure in Proverbs," 164-187.

¹⁷ 1:8, 2:1, 3:1, 3:21, 4:1, 4:10, 4:20, 5:1 (and 7), 6:20, 7:1

¹⁸ For example, Newsom ("Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 144) includes verses 8-9 with the prologue of the book of Proverbs and delimits the first speech as verses 10-19.

¹⁹ Lecture #1: 1:10, 15; lecture #3: 3:11; lecture #8: 5:20; lecture #10: 7:24.

not walk in the way with them" [1:15], "Why should you, my son, be intoxicated by a strange woman?" [5:20]).²⁰ In this lecture, the supplementary **בְּנִי** vocatives introduce the speech of the sinners (v. 10) and make a direct appeal to the son to reject their rhetoric (v. 15, see below).²¹

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

This lecture implores the son to accept parental teaching. However, the rhetor does not explicate this teaching. Rather, the entire lecture is devoted to persuading the son to reject an alternative rhetoric, namely the rhetoric of ferocious "sinners" who offer immediate gratification of the son's desire for adventure, wealth, and companionship. To combat the appeal of this rhetoric and convince the son to listen instead to parental instruction, the father employs a subtle rhetorical strategy that is often misread by his contemporary interpreters.

a. Logos

Deliberative speech, as conceptualized by Aristotle, seeks to persuade an audience to adopt an attitude or make a decision regarding the future and has

²⁰ This distinction is only semantic. There is no difference between the syntactical usage of **בְּנִי** in the proems and in the body of the lectures. On 4 occasions, the construction imperative + **בְּנִי** introduces a new rhetorical unit (e.g., **בְּנִי שְׁמַע** [1:8]; see also, 4:1, 4:10, 6:20). However, in the other 6 lectures, the construction **בְּנִי** + imperative or conditional clause introduces a new rhetorical unit (2:1, 3:1, 3:21, 4:20, 5:1, 7:1). In the bodies of the lectures the syntax is both **בְּנִי** + imperative (1:10,15, 3:11, 7:24) and imperfect + **בְּנִי** (5:20).

In addition to the semantic difference between **בְּנִי** in the proems and in the body of the lectures, the context in which **בְּנִי** appears also helps define its function. For example, in 1:10 and 15, **בְּנִי** does not introduce a new topic as it does in 1:8. Thus, while 1:8 marks the beginning of a new lecture, 1:10 and 15 denote new sections within the lecture.

²¹ See also Whybray, *Proverbs*, 39.

"expediency" as its primary aim, i.e., what is best in the given situation.²² This definition aptly describes the rhetoric of 1:8-9. In this lecture, the rhetor attempts to persuade his audience that the expedient course of action is to accept parental instruction and reject the rhetoric of the "sinners." Further, the structure or outline of this lecture is similar to the common Western form of deliberative speech

Proem - 1:8a
 Proposition - 1: 8a-9
 Proof - 1:10-18
 Epilogue - 1:19²³

The proem and proposition are intermingled in verse 8. A proem in deliberative rhetoric establishes the relationship of the speaker to the audience and thus gains initial favor with the audience. In this speech, the proem consists of the single Hebrew word, בִּנְיָ - "my son." While this word certainly asserts a speaker/audience relationship, there is considerable disagreement about the nature of this liaison.

²² Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, I.ii.5. "The end of the deliberative speaker is the expedient or harmful; for he who exhorts recommends a course of action as better, and he who dissuades advises against it as worse; all other considerations, such as justice and injustice, honor and disgrace, are included as accessory in reference to this."

²³ The use of categories from deliberative rhetoric to outline the lectures is not new (e.g., Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 235), although my application of these categories to all ten lectures is unique. The primary significance of my identification of this lecture as deliberative rhetoric and my outline based on this identification is that I identify vv. 8-9 as the proposition that the rhetor defends in the proof of vv. 10-18. Other scholars (e.g., Toy, *Proverbs*, 13-14; McKane, *Proverbs*, 268) typically regard vv. 8-9 as merely an introduction (i.e., a proem), rather than the lecture's proposal.

On the one hand, numerous scholars assert that בִּנְיָ denotes a kinship relation, i.e., a real father speaking to his biological son.²⁴ This hypothesis depends entirely on three texts within the lectures that mention the son's mother.

Listen, my son, to the instruction of your father
and do not disregard the teaching of your mother. (1:8)

Guard, my son, the commandment of your father
and do not neglect the teaching of your mother. (6:20)

According to the proponents of this position, the admonitions of 1:8 and 6:20 are roundabout ways of referring to the speaker's own instruction. In other words, it is the son's physical father who addresses him and urges him to accept "the instruction of your father."

Additional support for a familial relationship is arguably found in the instructional setting envisioned by the speaker in 4:3-4.

For I was a son of my father,
delicate and alone before my mother,
and he taught me and said to me, (4:3-4a)

In the following verses (vv. 4b-9), the speaker recounts what his father taught him. It is difficult to deny that the "grandfather's" speech was originally delivered in a familial setting; the "grandfather" spoke when the "son" was "delicate and alone before my mother." However, that the rhetorical setting of the lecture of 4:1-9 is identical to the

²⁴ Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," *NIB*, ed. L. Keck, et al., vol. 5 *Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 31,37; Roger N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*, BZAW, vol. 135 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974), 42-43; Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 15; Michael V. Fox, "The Social Location of the Book of Proverbs," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions*, ed. Michael Fox, et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 230-32.

retorical setting of the grandfather's speech is a dubious assumption.²⁵ The rhetorical situations are not the same. For example, while the "grandfather's" speech addressed an individual son, in 4:1 the rhetor addresses "sons" (שְׁמַעוּ בָנִים); I will discuss this shift and its significance in my analysis of 4:1-9; see below, pp. 132f.

It is also questionable whether 1:8 and 6:20 adequately support the hypothesis of a familial rhetorical situation. Read closely, these texts appear to be appeals to accept traditional sources of authority, exemplified by the roles of the father and mother. In other words, it is possible that 1:8 is not circumlocutionary language, but a direct indicator that someone other than the son's physical "father" or "mother" is speaking and urging the "son" to accept his parent's teaching.²⁶ This possible reading becomes probable in light of further evidence.

First, ancient Near Eastern literature attests to the custom of utilizing the term "son" as a "form of address to a subordinate or by a subordinate when referring to himself."²⁷ This use of "son" is found in the Wisdom literature of Ugarit,²⁸

²⁵ Athalya Brenner ("Proverbs 1-9: An F Voice?" in *On Gendering Text: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Fokkelen Van Dijk-Hemmes [New York: E.J. Brill, 1993], 118) raises a similar concern: "But who is the narrator-in-the-text, the privileged I persona? Should we take a logical leap and decide that like father, like son, like initial speaker? Does the identity of the fictive target audience, the textual 'sons', automatically imply the same gender for the 'teacher' who addresses them."

²⁶ Kathleen A. Farmer, *Who Knows What is Good? Proverbs & Ecclesiastes*, ITC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 26-27.

²⁷ CAD 10, s.v., "maru," 308.

²⁸ For example, "my son, your time is at hand" (Duane E. Smith, "Wisdom Genres in RS 22.439," in *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible*, Duane E. Smith and Stan Rummel, eds. [Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1975], RS 22.439 I:9 [p. 222]; see also, I 17,19 and 11:6).

Mesopotamia²⁹ and Egypt.³⁰ Second, and more importantly, biblical texts attest to the use of "son" as a designation for a student or pupil (e.g., I Sam 3:6, 16, Qoh 12:12) and "father" as a designation for a teacher (e.g., II Kgs 2:3-5, 12).³¹ Third, in the eighth lecture (5:1-23), also addressed to "my son" (𐎶𐎶, 5:1), the speaker warns the "son" that, if he rejects his advice and falls prey to the rhetoric of the foreign woman, he will lament,

How I hated discipline,
and my heart disdained reproof.
I did not obey the voice of my teachers,
and I did not incline my ear to my instructors. (5:13-14)

²⁹ For example, "[My s]on, ch[at]ter not overmuch so that thou speak out [every w]ord [that] comes to thy mind" ("The Words of Ahiqar," vii 96; see also ix 123-41 and x 1.42-158 [ANET 428-229]); "My son, if it be the wish of the prince that you are his" ("Counsels of Wisdom," 81 [ANET 595]); "The son of a school-master like carnelian-stone . . . (?); he is a scribe!" (Edmund I. Gordon, *Sumerian Proverbs: Glimpses of Everyday Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* [Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1959], 2.45). Gordon (205) observes that "son of a school-master" should perhaps be translated as "a member of the school-master's profession." Other familial language was also used in Sumerian education, e.g., the teacher's assistant was called the "big brother" (ses-gal; Gordon, 20).

³⁰ Most Egyptian Instructions take the form of an address of a father to his son (e.g., "Ptah-Hotep," 25-50 [ANET 412], "Amen-em-opet," ii 10-15 [ANET 421], "Ani" [ANET 420], "Hor-Dedef" [ANET 419], "Amen-em-het" [ANET 418], and "Meri-ka-re" [ANET 414-415]). The interpretation of these texts is debated. Fox ("The Social Location of the Book of Proverbs," 230-231) claims that these texts depict men speaking to their actual sons. McKane (*Proverbs*, 51-52, 65, 92) argues that in most cases the parental form of address is a literary convention and that the Instructions are more general in character and thus, most Instructions were educational manuals for apprentice officials or scribes. See also Philip Nel, "The Concept of 'Father' in the Wisdom Literature of the Ancient Near East," JNSL 5 (1977): 60-61.

³¹ Elsewhere, "father"/"son" language denotes other types of hierarchical relationships: I Sam 10:12, 24:12 (MT; 24:11, Eng.), 24:17 (MT; 24:16, Eng.), 25:8, 26:17, II Sam 18:22, II Kgs 2:12.

It is significant that here, the "son" identifies those who addressed him as "my son" (5:1) as "my teachers" (מֹרֵי) and "my instructors" (מְלִמֵּי), not "my father" or "my mother."

The weaknesses in the arguments in favor of a familial relationship combined with the evidence supporting some type of teacher-pupil relationship leads me to the conclusion that the rhetorical situation of 1:8-19 is the address of a teacher/sage to his student(s). This assertion is not a denial of the existence of family education in ancient Israel nor an assertion of a formal school setting for the lectures. Rather, by adopting the language of the family (בֵּן) and admonishing the son to accept parental authority, the speaker envisions his role as an extension or continuation of familial education. As Philip Nel writes,

The authoritative character of his [the sage's] teaching is rooted in the authoritative family-education - par excellence, education in tradition. Thus the professional instructions of the wisdom-teacher are only a continuation of tradition, and not a substitution. The teacher acts *in loco parentis*.³²

Thus, with the single word בֵּן, the poem accomplishes the task of establishing the speaker's relationship to the audience and his right to speak and be heard: He is their instructor and they are his pupils.³³

The proposition consists of two verses (1:8-9). In the first, the speaker states his objective in both positive and negative terms. The son/student should listen to the instruction of his father and should not neglect the teaching of his mother (1:8). The

³² Nel, "The Concept of "Father," 59.

³³ In order to avoid confusion, despite the speaker's use of "my son," I will denote the speaker/writer of 1:8-19 as the rhetor or speaker rather than father.

best thing for the pupil to do is to accept the authority and counsel of his parents.³⁴ In support of this proposal, the speaker supplies an initial argument: Listening to traditional authority will bring the son social standing ("a garland of favor for your head and necklaces for your neck," 1:9).³⁵

This promised benefit is not unrelated to the subsequent rhetoric. Rather, this reward preempts the promises that will be made in the speech of the sinners, namely adventure, wealth, and companionship (see below). Recognizing the allure of these promises, the speaker claims that parental values and teaching will provide the social status sought by the son.³⁶ The proposition, then, asserts that the son can best achieve his goals by accepting the rhetoric of the sage, not the rhetoric of the sinners. Or, as Newsom states it, "The first speech that is addressed to the son is precisely about how to resist interpellation by a rival discourse."³⁷

³⁴ Overland ("Literary Structure in Proverbs 1-9," 184) argues on the basis of literary links to 1:3-5 that we should not read the imperative **שמע** (hear) as a commonplace component of the summons: "if one were reading or hearing Proverbs for the first time, beginning with ch. 1, **שמע** would not yet have developed a commonplace summons value. If we confine ourselves to these two texts [1:3-5 and 1:8-19], **שמע** in v. 5 describes the primary activity of a wise man. Then in v. 8 **שמע** exhorts the pupil to behave as the wise man who was previously described. To begin the second text with **שמע** seems coincidental, but may actually reflect a strategic repetition which has significance when viewed against the backdrop of the preceding text."

³⁵ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 38; Scott, *Proverbs*, 38.

³⁶ The promise of illicit adventure is addressed by the father, but not in the initial statement of the proposition. Later, he will argue that such adventure will end in misadventure, the entrapment of the sinners' in traps of their own making (vv. 16-18).

³⁷ Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 144.

The proof (1:10-18) consists of two inter-related parts. First, the rhetor cites the speech of the "sinners" (1:10-14). This speech begins with the imperative "Come with us" (לָכֶּה אִתָּנוּ; 1:11), followed by five cohortatives that signify the purpose of "coming with us." The first three cohortatives identify the purpose of coming as an illicit adventure. The sinners propose that the son join them in setting ambushes to destroy the innocent, i.e., to kill for the fun of it (וְהָנֵם; 1:11). Then, drawing on images from Canaanite mythology, they propose swallowing people whole like Sheol swallows the living (1:12).³⁸

Many scholars read these verses as if they were an external proof or a reliable citation from the sinners.³⁹ If so, it is hard to imagine why the speaker is concerned about such rhetoric. Although possible, what son in the sage's audience would be persuaded to join a gang of thugs in order to go about killing the innocent for no reason or benefit? Further, the sinner's speech, as cited by the rhetor, is crass and appears to be of little suasive strength. I do not deny that such gangs existed in ancient Israel. But I do doubt that such outrageous rhetoric would have been a cause for the serious concern exhibited by this rhetor. The conclusion of this lecture (1:19) will reveal a different purpose for the sinner's speech (see below).

This speech is not an external proof, i.e., it is not a real speech from the sinners. Rather, as Newsom has pointed out, this alleged speech is completely

³⁸ McKane, *Proverbs*, 269; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 40.

³⁹ Toy, *Proverbs*, 14-16; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 8-9; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 39-40; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 37-38; Estes, *Hear My Son*, 116.

controlled by the rhetor. The speaker has created this hyperbolic speech, so exaggerated that even the most simple minded son can "deconstruct" (i.e., see through) it and return safely to the counsel of his parents.⁴⁰ To be sure, hyperbole is most effective when it is based on some element(s) of truth. Here, in these three cohortatives, this element of truth appears to be some offer of an adventuresome life unrestricted by the stagnant rules of tradition.

The fourth and fifth cohortatives exaggerate a second element in the rhetoric of the opposition, namely the acquisition of wealth ("let us find every precious valuable; let us fill our houses with plunder," 1:13). The traditional ethics for accumulating wealth are articulated throughout the book of Proverbs. Wealth is a blessing bestowed by the Lord (10:22) on those who work diligently (12:27, 13:4, 12:11). The rhetoric of the sinners offers a quicker and easier way to wealth: Find an item of value and take it. Yet again, the rhetor exaggerates their appeal: "let us *fill* our houses with plunder" (1:13b).

The speech of the "sinners" concludes with another imperative/cohortative construction (1:14). The sinners urge the son to cast his lot with them and become a share-holder in the common purse. Once again, the speaker picks up on what was most likely a real element in the rhetoric of the opposition, namely membership in an egalitarian community. Van Leeuwen explains, "In contrast to the segmented society of Proverbs, with its degrees of honor, the company of sinners presents itself as a

⁴⁰ Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 144-45. See also, Crenshaw, "Wisdom and Authority," 14. The use of fictive speeches in rhetoric is not unusual. See, for example, the use of fictive speeches in the diatribes of Malachi (David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, OTL [Louisville: Westminster Press, 1995], 31-32).

successful community with egalitarian and utopian claims: share and share alike."⁴¹

This appeal does not appear to be hyperbolic. It is, however, sardonic. In view of the "self-confessed" ruthless behavior of the gang, wantonly killing and robbing for profit, only a fool would be foolish enough to entrust his goods and his person to such thugs (cf. Prov 14:16). By placing this invitation at the end of the hyperbolic speech, the rhetor subtly ridicules anyone who would listen to or join such a group.

What is the rhetorical function of the speech of the sinners? How does this speech relate to the proposition to accept parental authority?⁴² On the one hand, the rhetor has created such a hyperbolic invitation that the invitation itself has lost its persuasive appeal. No one would be so foolish as to join such a ruthless gang of thugs. Or, at least this conclusion is the rhetorical goal of the fictitious speech. On the other hand, in the process of debunking the sinners, it is likely that the rhetor's creation engages three real promises made by the opposition that intersect with the desires of the son, namely the son's desire for adventure, for wealth, and for companionship. The presence of these ideas in the proof suggests that the rhetorical problem is the son's longing to fulfill these desires, and the potential of fulfilling them

⁴¹ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 33.

⁴² Newsom ("Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 145) also acknowledges the exaggeration and asks "what else is going on here? Who and what is the son really being warned against? It seems scarcely credible that the advice should be taken at face value as career counseling. It is much more likely that this depiction of brigands is a metaphor for something else."

in ways contrary to the traditional mores advocated by his parents and teacher.⁴³ Thus, the rhetor's strategy to dissuade the son from joining the sinners consists of revealing the "true" nature of their appeals through hyperbole, i.e., their invitation to adventure is really an invitation "to lie in wait for blood" (1:11).

The second part of the proof, like the first, begins with the vocative "my son" (1:15). Then, two imperatives reiterate the proposition of the lecture in negative terms, "do not walk in the road with them," and "restrain your foot from their paths" (1:15). Although the preceding speech of the wicked has already contributed strong proof not to join the sinners, the proposition is now supported by additional evidence, namely two citations and a conclusion drawn from the citations.⁴⁴

The first citation is nearly identical to Isaiah 59:7: "Their feet run to evil, and they hurry to shed blood" (1:16). It is impossible to know the relationship of this verse to Isaiah (see below on Ethos). Nonetheless, its function in the lecture is straightforward. This citation describes the road and the path from which the son should restrain his foot (1:15) as a path in which the feet of the sinners run to do evil and shed blood.

The second citation comes from an unknown source: "Vainly the net is spread out in the plain sight of any bird" (1:17). The interpretation of this citation depends

⁴³ Aletti comments ("Seduction et Parole en Proverbes I-IX," 137), "On comprend pourquoi le livre des Proverbes commence par ce discours; ce qu'il propose est tout simplement la tentation dont le maître veut détourner l'élève: croire qu'on peut trouver bonheur et prospérité autrement que par l'apprentissage de la sagesse."

⁴⁴ On the rhetor's use of sentence proverbs to reinforce the argument, see Crenshaw, "Wisdom and Authority," 13-16.

on two key issues: the meaning of the word **מִזְרָה**, and whether the birds are a cipher for the sinners or the son.⁴⁵ The context of the speech (especially v. 18) suggests that "the birds" refer to both the sinners and the son, if the son decides to join them. Birds have the sense to see and avoid a net spread out⁴⁶ in plain sight. Thus, spreading a net in plain sight is futile.

These citations function as external proofs to support the speaker's imperative to reject the sinner's invitation. The first describes the lifestyle of the sinners: They walk in a road in which they run to do evil and hurry to shed blood. The second citation provides a point of comparison for the folly of the sinners. The conclusion brings both ideas together, "So they lie in ambush for their own blood; they lurk for their own lives" (v. 18). According to the rhetor, anyone should be able to see where the lifestyle of the rebels is leading: they are running to bloodshed (v. 16). Their lifestyle is a net laid out in plain sight (v. 17). Yet, they are more foolish than a bird because the "plain sight" of catastrophe does not deter them. They run ahead to bloodshed, even though they can plainly see that the blood shed ultimately will be their own (v. 18).

The hyperbolic nature of the second half of the proof (e.g., the sinners run to do evil and *hurry* to shed blood, they have less sense than a senseless bird) again raises the question of the real concern of the rhetor. I have already suggested that we

⁴⁵ Farmer, *Who Knows*, 28; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 9; Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 144-45.

⁴⁶ Following the MT **מִזְרָה** ("spread out"). See footnote #13.

should not read the speech of the sinners literally. Here, in the second half of the proof, it also seems probable that the rhetor's warning against the sinners is metaphorical. This suspicion is confirmed by the epilogue of the lecture: "Thus (١٩) are the ways of all those who gain an unjust gain, it [unjust gain] will take the life of its owner" (1:19). Now the logos of the lecture becomes clear. The speaker is not worried about the son rejecting his parent's teaching and joining a murderous band of thieves. Rather, he is concerned about the son's rejection of his parent's teaching due to his desire for wealth. The rhetor has lured the son into agreeing with him that the speech (1:11-14) and the lifestyle (1:15-18) of the sinners are foolish. Joining such a gang to find adventure, obtain wealth, and companionship is "obviously" suicidal. But in a deft move, after gaining the son's agreement, the father cinches the rhetorical knot: The way of the murderous bandits is the way of all those who reject communal norms and pursue unjust gain! This is an effective rhetorical strategy for persuading the son that what he may consider to be a minor violation of traditional values is in fact a lethal rejection of parental guidance. The logical argument thus doubles back to reaffirm the proposition. The son should accept the teaching of his parents because only they present the path to genuine social honor and life (1:8-9).⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Newsom ("Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 145) offers a similar assessment of the rhetorical problem: "The rival discourse against which the father argues can be made visible in its general outlines: it is one with a horizontal rather than vertical structure of authority, based not on patriarchal family affiliation but on common enterprise, and one that offers young men immediate access to wealth rather than the deferred wealth of inheritance. What lurks under the surface is the generational chasm, the division of power between older and younger men in patriarchal society. The genuine appeal to younger men of the set of values just described is cleverly defused by associating them with what is clearly outside the law."

b. Ethos

The rhetor exhibits considerable concern for his ethos in this lecture: Why should the son listen to him? Here, this issue is especially important because of the presence of an alternative ethos, i.e., why not eject father/rhetor and trust the rhetoric of the sinners? Consequently, the speaker attempts to establish his credibility by means of four different rhetorical devices.

The first two devices are common to all the lectures. First, the speaker addresses his audience as "my son" (בְּנִי). As argued above, בְּנִי asserts the speaker's position of authority (a teacher) over the audience (his pupils). This relationship is external to the speech, i.e., it is not created by the speech but based on a pre-existent relationship. Nonetheless, it is a fundamental source of the speaker's ethos, especially here where it is repeated three times (1:8, 10, 15). The son should listen to the rhetor because of his own inferior social position *vis-a-vis* the rhetor.⁴⁸

Second, the rhetor's address is stylistically rich. The lecture contains simile (1:12), metaphor (the path/way, 1:15; the bird, 1:17), and terse parallelism (1:8, 14, 15, 16). The density of these stylistic devices elevates the rhetor's language from vulgar prose to a more formal address, namely, poetry.⁴⁹ The rhetorical effect of this move is multifaceted. On the one hand, scholars widely acknowledge that poetic language is more memorable than prose. In other words, the rhetor may have cast the

⁴⁸ This observation holds regardless of the specific identities assigned to the father and the son, i.e., whether "my son" denotes a familial or educational relationship. In either case, the ethos of the speaker is based on a socially fixed hierarchical position of authority over the son.

⁴⁹ On the definition and identification of Hebrew poetry, see David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*, GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

lecture into poetic form to facilitate the son's later recall of his appeal. On the other hand, the metaphor and similes of the lecture challenge the son to reflection and contemplate the rhetor's words on a deeper level than that elicited by direct prose statements.

In addition to these rhetorical effects, the poetic style of this and other lectures may also be significant for establishing the rhetor's ethos. Kennedy has pointed out that poetic style is typical of "formal language."⁵⁰ Further, according to Kennedy, such formal language expresses and exercises social power and control. He writes,

The human inclination to develop formal languages is one of many indications of the basically conservative function of rhetoric in human history. Formal languages are often archaic or revivals of what is regarded as the pure form of the language used in the past. They thus contribute to the preservation of other past values. The requirement to use them for serious discourse helps ensure preservation of the status quo on the behalf of those in power and limits the ability of marginal groups, untutored in elitist language, from effecting change.⁵¹

While the existence or degree of archaism in the lecture is difficult to determine,⁵² the poetic style of the lecture is clear (see above). Kennedy's observation suggests that the poetic style of the lecture may serve to enhance the rhetor's ethos. Poetry is a type of formal address. Although poetic language is not the exclusive property of the wealthy and those with high social standing, the ability to compose and speak poetry

⁵⁰ Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 217.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁵² In order to determine the degree of archaism in this lecture, one would have to date the text — a notorious problem in the study of Proverbs 1-9.

does typically bespeak a high level of education, training, and social status.⁵³ Thus, the rhetor of Proverbs 1:8-19 may be employing poetry to assert his power, credibility, and social standing, i.e., his ethos.

Third, the rhetor increases his ethos by destroying the ethos of the opposition. He names them "sinners" (1:10) and calls their speech an attempt to "seduce" or "entice" (פְּתוּהוּ, 1:10) the son. Further, he describes their activities with hyperbolic and brutal terminology: lying in ambush "for blood" (1:11a), lurking for the innocent "without cause" (1:11c), swallowing people alive like Sheol (1:12), running to do evil (1:16a), and hurrying to shed blood (1:16b). The truthfulness of these claims is questionable. Nonetheless, like a savvy politician, the rhetor establishes himself as the rhetor of preference by destroying the credibility of his opponent. While the sinners only want the son to join their journey to self-destruction, the rhetor cares about the son's enduring welfare. This destruction of the opponent's ethos is an effective rhetorical ploy for building the rhetor's ethos in this lecture.

It is difficult to gauge the impact of the fourth rhetorical device used to develop the speaker's ethos, namely his citations. One reason for this difficulty is that it cannot be ascertained whether the rhetor draws his first citation (1:16) from the book of Isaiah, or whether both texts utilize a common tradition. If this citation depends on Isaiah, and if the audience recognized this dependency, the ethos of the speaker would have been increased by demonstrating his fluency in the community's religious

⁵³ Kennedy (*Comparative Rhetoric*, 217) asserts that "use of formal language has to be learned and is not available to everyone; it thus exercises social power of a conservative sort."

tradition. Regardless of their source, the presence of citations in the speech suggests that the audience would have recognized the rhetor's appeal to tradition. Further, since neither citation is explained or defended, it is likely that the audience acknowledged the validity of both statements. Thus, by using citations, the rhetor has elicited external proof to support his rational argument and increased his credibility by demonstrating familiarity with the audience's traditions.⁵⁴

c. Pathos

The primary pathetic tool utilized by the speaker in this lecture is fear. The rhetor vividly portrays the fate of a person who accepts the rhetoric of the sinners and joins them. Their adventure in wanton violence, robbery, and companionship will end in the violent seizure of their blood and their lives (1:18). Anyone who regards his life should be afraid of the seduction of these sinners, and gratefully take refuge in the secure paths offered by his parents.

Other than this element of fear, the rhetor makes little use of emotions to persuade the son. The rhetor does appeal to the son's interests, namely his desire for

⁵⁴ The traditio-historical thesis of Harris (*Proverbs 1-9: A Study of Inner-Biblical Interpretation*, 52-61) leads to a similar conclusion. Harris argues that Prov 1:8-19 "represents" the discourse of Gen 37 (see above, pp. 13-14). He writes, "the hermeneutic move of planting the traditio-historical identity within Genesis, on the one hand, and in the book of Proverbs, on the other hand, facilitates a hearing of the traditions which fluctuated within the history of Israel's memory. Such a strategy is played out to the attentive reader or hearer who recognizes the rephrased words of the older sections of Proverbs in the mouth of the implied speakers from Genesis 37, i.e. from Torah" (58). Harris further recognizes the importance of this hermeneutical move for the ethos or authority of the speaker: "the authority of the parent's words, as framed by the narrator, in Prov 1:8-19 is not derived solely from their own *experience*, but is now fixed within the "biblical" traditions which they imply" (59).

social honor (1:9). However, this desire lies at the heart of the rhetorical problem, namely the expedient means for acquiring social status and wealth. Thus, the rhetor does not use this passion to further his argument but attempts to guide the son's pursuit of social status.

4. Summary & Conclusions

The rhetorical situation of 1:8-19 is an educational setting in which a teacher addresses his pupil(s). This teacher closely associates himself with the traditional locus of instruction, namely the parents, and sees his role as an extension of their parental teaching. Within this setting, the rhetor faces one major problem. The son is faced with the opportunity to reject the authority of both the rhetor and his parents and their guidance for the proper acquisition of wealth and social standing.⁵⁵ In its place, the son sees the possibility of circumventing cultural norms, perhaps in what he regards as small or innocent ways. In this reading, the rhetorical problem is not necessarily a one time event, but an ongoing temptation.

The rhetor responds to this rhetorical problem with a vigorous exercise in persuasion. For his proposition, the rhetor appeals to the son to accept rather than disregard his parents' authority. He defends this proposition by a subtle rhetorical ploy in which he gains the consent of the son against a group that is obviously set against

⁵⁵ "Traditional authority" refers to the cultural norms supported by those who possess power over the son, namely the rhetor/teacher and his parents. Thus, any advice that challenges these norms constitutes "non-traditional authority" and thereby must be rejected.

cultural norms (1:10-18), and then asserts that this group is representative of all those who reject traditional authority for unjust gain (1:19).

The rhetor develops his strategy first, by placing a hyperbolic speech in the mouths of the sinners (1:10-14). This speech portrays the sinners, i.e., the non-traditionalists, and their invitation as ludicrous, thus destroying both their ethos and logos while building the ethos of the father and furthering his rational argument. The rhetor/father also employs citations in order to draw a decisive conclusion about the fate of the sinners: they will be caught in their own trap (1:15-18). Finally, after gaining the support of the audience against the despicable sinners, the rhetor springs his rhetorical trap. The invitation, life-style, and fate of the sinners is only a metaphor for *all those who seek to make a profit by unjust means* (1:19). Those who abandon cultural norms in favor of aberrant or unorthodox behavior, regardless of the magnitude of such behavior, are like the sinners. The problem is not the seductive invitation of murderous bandits, but the son's failure to recognize the severe consequences of rejecting parental authority in what he might consider to be trivial matters.

Proverbs 2:1-22

1. Text and Translation

- 2:1 My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you -
- 2:2 making your ears pay attention to wisdom,
inclining your heart to understanding;
- 2:3 indeed, if you cry out for insight,
[if] you shout for understanding;

- 2:4 if you seek it like silver
and search for it like treasure;
- 2:5 then you will understand the fear of Yahweh,
and you will find the knowledge of God;
- 2:6 for Yahweh gives wisdom
from his mouth [comes] knowledge and understanding;
- 2:7 he treasures up sound judgment⁵⁶ for the upright;
[he is] a shield for those who walk with integrity,
- 2:8 guarding the ways of justice
and watching over the path of his faithful ones;⁵⁷
- 2:9 then you will understand righteousness, justice,
and uprightness - every good track;
- 2:10 for wisdom will enter into your heart
and knowledge will be pleasant⁵⁸ to your life;
- 2:11 prudence will watch over you
understanding will guard you;
- 2:12 to rescue you from the path of evil
from the man who speaks perversion:
- 2:13 those who abandon the right way
to walk in the paths of darkness;
- 2:14 those who enjoy doing evil -
they rejoice in perversions of evil;
- 2:15 those whose ways are perverted
and deceit is in their tracks;
- 2:16 to rescue you from the alien woman
from the stranger, who makes her words smooth;
- 2:17 who abandons the companion of her youth,
and forgets the covenant of her God;

⁵⁶ תוֹשֵׁיָהּ, see below on Pathos (p. 126); cf. 3:21.

⁵⁷ Reading the plural חֲסִידָיו with the Qere, LXX, and Syriac against the singular חֲסִידוֹ (Ketib) because of the previous plural references to the "upright" (יִשְׁרָיִם; 1:7a), "those who walk" (הֹלְכֵי; 1:7b), and the "ways of justice" (אֲרָחוֹת מִשְׁפָּט; 1:8a). Given this context of plural forms, it is most likely that the Ketib is a corruption of the Qere.

⁵⁸ This is an abnormal use of a masculine predicate (יִנְעֵם) with a feminine subject (וְדַעַת). See GKC 145u.

- 2:18 indeed, her house is a pit [leading down]⁵⁹ to death
and her tracks [lead] to the ghosts [of the dead],
2:19 none of those who go into her will return,
they will not catch up to the ways of the living;
2:20 therefore, you should walk in the path of goodness
and you should observe the ways of righteousness;
2:21 for the upright will inhabit the land
and the blameless will remain in it,
2:22 but the wicked will be cut off from the land,
and the faithless will be torn away⁶⁰ from it.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

Scholars generally agree upon the limits of this rhetorical unit.⁶¹ The first speech of personified wisdom addresses the simple ones (פְּתִיִּים) and scoffers (לִזְיִים);

⁵⁹ The MT is grammatically and philologically problematic due to the feminine verb שָׁקַטְהָ and the masculine הִתְחַלְּהָ. As it stands, the MT requires the translation, "she sinks down to death her home" (so Toy, *Proverbs*, 48; and Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs*, TynOTC, vol. 15 [Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964], 62). However, as Toy points out, the parallelism suggests that "house" is the subject, not the object, of the verb. Further, the meaning of the verb שָׁקַט is uncertain (e.g., incline [AV], sink [and by a questionable extension, lead down; Toy, *Proverbs*, 48]).

Scholars have proposed various solutions to this problem (see the excellent survey by J.A. Emerton, "A Note on Proverbs 2:18," *JTS* 30 [1979]: 153-58). My translation follows Emerton's emendation of the MT vowel points from שָׁקַטְהָ to שָׁקַטְהָ ("pit"), resulting in the reading, "her house is a pit (leading) to death." This emendation avoids changing the consonantal text and is supported by the context and other similar verses in Proverbs (e.g., 22:14, 23:27).

⁶⁰ The MT הִתְחַלְּהָ (a G Imperfect of חָלַס [to tear away, pull away]) is problematic in this context. W. Holladay (*A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1971], 239) and Waltke/O'Connor (*Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 23.6.d) adopt the reading הִתְחַלְּהָ (a G Passive [Waltke/O'Connor] or Hophal [Holladay]) from a Cairo Geniza text. GKC (144g) resolves this grammatical problem by observing that the third person plural is sometimes used to express an indefinite subject where the context does not admit a human agent. In such cases the plural comes to be equivalent to a passive. This later solution is preferable and adopted here because it avoids textual emendation.

⁶¹ For example, Toy, *Proverbs*, 31-32; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 13-14; Farmer, *Who Knows*, 31; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 42-43. See especially, Overland, "Literary Structure in Proverbs 1-9," 255-285.

1:20-27), offers a reflection about their fate to an unidentified audience (1:28-33), and concludes with a summary appeal (1:32-33). In contrast to this speech, 2:1-22 addresses a different audience ("my son," 2:1) on a different topic (the teaching of the rhetor). Thus, scholars appropriately designate 2:1 as the beginning of a new unit. There is also conclusive evidence for this lecture extending through and ending in 2:22. 1) 2:1-22 is a single complex sentence in Hebrew. 2) 2:1-19 develops a cohesive argument. 3) 2:20-22 presents a summary conclusion. 4) 3:1 begins a new lecture (see chp. 4).⁶²

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

Michael Fox introduces his study of the pedagogy in Proverbs 2 by identifying the problems faced by the interpreter, especially the form critic.⁶³ According to Fox, Proverbs 2 is peculiar in two ways: 1) the exordium or call to attention takes up half of the lecture (vv. 1-11), and 2) the lecture lacks imperatives or specific advice. 2:1-22, because of these peculiarities, does not adhere to the typical instruction form.⁶⁴

⁶² Further, there is no supporting textual evidence for rearranging the text or expelling parts of the text as unoriginal (e.g., Whybray [*Wisdom in Proverbs*, 40-41] claims that the original nucleus of this lecture consists of verses 1, 9, and 16-19; Toy [*Proverbs*, 38-39] inserts verse 20 between verse 9 and 10).

⁶³ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 234.

⁶⁴ For example, McKane (*Proverbs*, 278-79) hesitates to describe this text as an instruction and prefers to view it as an example of a "process of formal development based on the Instruction. The tendency of this development is to diminish the element of authoritative instruction communicated briefly and precisely by imperatives, and so to substitute the more diffuse, rambling style of preaching for the more exact didactic procedures of the wisdom teacher."

Similarly, Whybray (*Proverbs*, 50) has little regard for this chapter as a whole: "As an example of teaching method this cumbersome discourse lacks both precision and compactness; it gives the impression that successive layers have been added to an originally much shorter

Nonetheless, the lecture itself is not a problematic composition. Rather, it is powerful rhetoric in the service of its own proposition. As Fox writes,

These peculiarities [the lengthy exordium and lack of imperatives] have led some commentators to dismiss the chapter as it stands as rambling and unstructured. These peculiarities would indeed be flaws if this lecture were attempting to do the same thing as the other units of Collection I [Proverbs 1-9]. But that is not the case. Proverbs 2 has a different purpose, namely, to encourage the pupil in the search of wisdom.⁶⁵

Indeed, the purpose of this lecture is different from six other lectures: 3:1-12, 3:21-35, 4:20-27, 5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27. However, it is quite similar to the propositions of 1:8-19, 4:1-9 (as Fox also observes),⁶⁶ and 4:10-19, i.e., the lectures of my group I.

a. Logos

Proverbs 2:1-22 is deliberative rhetoric that attempts to persuade the audience ("my son") to accept and attend diligently to the instruction of the teacher. However, like the first lecture (1:8-19), this teaching is not explicated. Rather, the entire speech is devoted to persuading the son to listen to the rhetor, who will rescue him from two opposing groups, namely the evil men (2:12-15) and the alien woman (2:16-19). The lecture may be outlined as follows:⁶⁷

and crisper Instruction of which 5:1-6 might be taken as a model."

⁶⁵ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 234.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 234 n. 5.

⁶⁷ Patrick Skehan ("The Seven Columns of Wisdom's House in Proverbs 1-9," *CBQ* 9 [1947]: 190-98; "A Single Editor for the Whole Book of Proverbs," *CBQ* 10 [1948]: 115-17; "Wisdom's House," *CBQ* 29 [1967]: 468-486) has proposed an elaborate explanation for the literary unity of 2:1-22, its function within Proverbs 1-9, and the structure of the book of Proverbs. According to Skehan, the structure of the poem is governed alphabetically. The poem has 22 lines (corresponding to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet). Further,

Proem: 2:1a
 Proposition: 2:1b-11
 Proof: 2:12-19
 Epilogue: 2:20-22

The proem consists of the single vocative "my son" (בְּנִי, 2:1a). As in the first lecture, this term establishes the relationship of the rhetor/teacher to his audience/pupil and thus provides an immediate reason for the audience to listen to this speaker (see my discussion of בְּנִי above, pp. 92-96). The proposition consists of an elaborate conditional sentence (2:1-11). In the protasis (2:1-4), the rhetor uses eight different verbs of increasing intensity to describe the desired response of the pupil:

these lines form two sets of three stanzas, each set containing stanzas of 4 + 4 + 3 verses. The first three stanzas each begin with the letter *aleph* (2:1,5, 9) and the second three stanzas each begin with the letter *lamed* (2:12,16,20). The letter *lamed* is significant because it is the twelfth letter of the Hebrew alphabet and thus represents the second half of the alphabet.

According to Skehan, this external structure corresponds to the thought progression of the poem and the following chapters. The contents of the six stanzas of chp. 2 correspond to the six literary units of 22 lines each in chps. 2-7. Each of these units composes one of the seven columns of wisdom's house (9:1). The first stanza provides an introduction (2:1-4) and corresponds to 2:1-22, and the sixth stanza offers a conclusion (2:20-22) and corresponds to 6:20-7:6. The middle four stanzas of chp. 2 introduce the four topics found in chapters 3-7: the positive benefits of study that will accrue to the pupil through friendship with Yahweh (2:5-8, corresponding to 3:1-12, 25-34) and through the possession of wisdom (2:9-11, corresponding to 3:13-24, 4:1-9), and the dangers of evil men (2:12-15, corresponding to 4:10-27 and 5:21-23) and evil women (2:16-19, corresponding to 5:1-20 and 6:22). The seventh and final column is 7:2-27. In Skehan's opinion, these seven columns correspond to the front porch of Solomon's temple and are followed by 15 columns of 25 lines each which correspond to the nave of the temple (10:1-22:16) and 15 more columns which correspond to cella (22:17-31:31).

Aspects of Skehan's hypothesis have been revised and adopted by many scholars. For example, some scholars (Scott, *Proverbs*, 42-43; Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 2nd edition [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996], 16-17; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 42-43) adopt milder versions of Skehan's literary analysis of chapter 2, and some (Scott, *Proverbs*, 42-43; Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 17) accept chapter 2 as being somehow programmatic for Proverbs 1-9. However, scholars have rejected Skehan's elaborate schema of seven columns of 22 lines in chps. 1-9 and the column structure of the book as a whole because of its dependency on deletions and rearrangements unsupported by textual or contextual evidence.

receive (לִקַּח, v. 1), treasure (זָכַן, v. 1), pay attention (קָשַׁב, v. 2), incline (נָטָה) your ears (v. 2), cry out (קָרָא, v. 3), short (נָתַן קוֹלָךְ, v. 3), seek (בִּקֵּשׁ) like silver (v. 4), and search (חָפַשׁ) like treasure (v. 4). Similarly, he uses five different nouns to denote the object of this vigorous pursuit: my words (אִמְרֵי), my commandments (מִצְוֹתֵי), wisdom (חֲכָמָה), understanding (תְּבוּנָה, 2x), and insight (בִּינָה). Fox suggests that these terms combine to mark off a progression in the learner's task: "he must absorb the father's words (v. 1), and take the initiative to *call wisdom* (v. 3), and boldly go forth to *seek* her (v. 4)."⁶⁸ Consequently, although the imperative form is lacking, this protasis asserts a clear proposition for the lecture: The son must accept and energetically pursue the instruction of the rhetor.⁶⁹

The apodosis supplies two initial benefits supporting the proposition in two formally parallel units or stanzas (2:5-8/19-11). Both are introduced by אֲזַי תִּבְיִן

⁶⁸ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 237. See also, Overland, "Literary Structure in Proverbs 1-9," 270-272, 282.

⁶⁹ McKane (*Proverbs*, 282) adds, "It is not originality nor argumentativeness nor critical independence in the face of instruction that is demanded of the pupil. He must indeed be attentive and keen (v. 2), like one who cries out for insight and shouts for discernment, but the authority of the teacher must not be called in question."

Newsom ("Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 147) also picks up on this facet of the proposal: "Verses 1-11 make the astute observation that allegiance precedes understanding, not the other way around. We should not be surprised that these wisdom discourses do not closely define the pragmatic content of wisdom and contrast it with the competing discourses, seeking to convince the hearer of its superiority. Rather it repeatedly asks first for allegiance ("accept my words," "treasure up my strictures," "incline your ear," "extend your heart," vv. 1-2). Nor is the allegiance passive. It must involve active participation ("call out," "seek," vv. 3-4). Only then does understanding follow ("then you will understand the fear of Yahweh," v. 5; "then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path," v. 9), for at that point habituation to the assumptions, values, and cultural practices of the group will make them seem one's own ("for wisdom will come into your heart and your soul will delight in knowledge," v. 10). As Althusser pungently paraphrases Pascal, 'Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe.'

("then you will understand"), both assert reasons for this new-found understanding by means of clauses introduced by 'כִּי, and both promise protection for those who accept the teacher's wisdom. In the first apodosis (2:5-3), the rhetor promises the son that, as a result of accepting and acting upon the proposition, he will understand the "fear of Yahweh" and find the "knowledge of God" (2:5). These phrases suggest the two dimensions of a proper human/divine relationship: 1) awe and reverence, and 2) intimacy.⁷⁰ The value of such a relationship is elaborated in the next three verses (2:6-8, introduced by 'כִּי, "for"). Yahweh is the source of wisdom, knowledge and understanding (v. 6). He grants sound judgment to the upright and protects them (v. 7) by maintaining justice and keeping close watch over their lives (v. 8). Consequently, the first benefit of accepting and pursuing the rhetor's teaching is the promise that this teaching is valuable for bringing the pupil nearer to Yahweh and the gifts that Yahweh bestows.

The second initial reason for accepting the proposition depends on the first. As a result of his relationship with Yahweh, produced by accepting and pursuing the rhetor's teaching, the son will be able to discern every good track: righteousness, justice, and uprightness (2:9). The next two verses explain how the son will acquire this discernment (2:10-11, introduced by 'כִּי, "for"). Wisdom will enter the pupil's heart, knowledge will become pleasant to his life, prudence will watch over him, and

⁷⁰ See Kidner, *Proverbs*, 61; Toy, *Proverbs*, 35.

understanding will protect him (2:10-11). These quasi-personifications⁷¹ are closely related to the previously stated benefits of a proper relationship with Yahweh (2:5-8). Wisdom will enter the pupil's heart (2:10) because it is Yahweh who gives wisdom (2:6). Knowledge will become pleasant (2:10) because it comes from Yahweh (2:6). Prudence will watch over (שָׁמַר) him (2:11) just as Yahweh watches over (שָׁמַר) the path of his faithful ones (2:8). Finally, the understanding given by God (2:6) will protect (נָצַר) the son (2:11), just as God protects (נָצַר) the ways of justice (2:8).

This extended apodosis presents compelling reasons for accepting the proposition of the protasis. If the son will accept and strenuously pursue the rhetor's teaching, then he will enjoy a close relationship with Yahweh in which he will become the beneficiary of Yahweh's gifts (e.g., wisdom, understanding). These gifts will further bless the son by entering his heart, watching over and protecting him, and thus enabling him to discern the good path.

The proof, like the apodosis (2:5-11), is composed of two parallel stanzas that explicate two specific benefits of accepting the rhetor's proposition (2:12-15/16-19). Each stanza begins with the word לְהַצִּילֶךָ ("to rescue you"),⁷² identifies a potential

⁷¹ Scholars (and translators) are divided on whether verses 10-11 (and 3-4) personify wisdom (e.g., "her" - Toy [*Proverbs*, 32], Oesterley [*Proverbs*, 14], and Baumann, [*Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1-9*, 227-231]; "it" - Scott [*Proverbs*, 41]). It does appear that these verses stimulated the personifications of wisdom added in the interludes (so Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," 618). However, in this lecture, the personification is ambiguous at best. For example, in addition to promising protection by prudence and understanding, the rhetor promises that wisdom will *enter* the son's heart (v. 10a). It is difficult to imagine how personified wisdom would enter a person's heart.

⁷² The syntactical referent of these infinitives is not entirely clear, i.e., what subject or action do the infinitives ("to rescue you") explicate: the ability to understand every good track (v. 9, so McKane [*Proverbs*, 284]), wisdom entering the son's heart (v. 10 so Farmer [*Who*

danger, and provides an elaborate, perhaps even hyperbolic, description of the threat. These stanzas do not warn the son to avoid these dangers, but promise him that accepting the rhetoric of the father will deliver him from these dangers.⁷³ Thus, these stanzas function as proofs of the proposition, not additional propositions.

The first stanza promises that accepting and pursuing the rhetoric of the father will rescue the son from the path of evil, which is defined by the following parallel line as the person who speaks perversion (2:12). The character of this perverse speaker is elaborated by three descriptive phrases: 1) this person abandons what is right in order to do what is wrong (2:13); 2) this person enjoys doing what is evil (2:14); and 3) the lifestyle of this person is perverted and deceitful (2:15).

The second stanza promises that the rhetor's teaching will rescue the son from the seduction of the alien woman (2:16). The identity of the alien woman (אִשָּׁה זָרָה) or stranger (נִכְרִי יָדָה) in Proverbs 1-9 is a notorious interpretive crux.⁷⁴ In this lecture, two key phrases provide crucial evidence for her identity:

Knows, 32]), or prudence and understanding protecting the son (v. 11, so Fox ["The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 240])? In my view, each of these proposals fails to recognize the larger rhetorical function of these infinitival phrases. Because of their location after the proposition (vv. 1-11), these infinitival phrases function not only as explications of the further benefits of both halves of the apodosis (vv. 5-8 and 9-11), but ultimately as proofs of the proposition. If the son accepts the rhetor's instruction (vv. 1-4, the proposition), he will establish or deepen a relationship with Yahweh (apodosis #1, vv. 5-8) and gain the ability to discern what is good (apodosis #2, vv. 9-11). Both of these benefits will operate *together* to "rescue" the son from the evil men and strange woman. Thus, ultimately, the infinitival phrases refer to and serve as proof for the proposition of accepting the rhetor's words and commandments (vv. 1-4).

⁷³ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 240.

⁷⁴ See my discussion on pp. 18-19.

1) she "abandons the companion of her youth" (v. 17a), and 2) she "forgets the covenant of her God" (v. 17b).

Almost all scholars concur that "the companion of her youth" is the alien woman's husband.⁷⁵ Elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures, the term "companion" (אֶלֶף) is translated as "tribal chief" or "clan" (e.g., Gen 36:15-43), "cattle" (plural in Ps 144:14), or "close friend" (Ps 55:14, Mic 7:5, Prov 16:28, 17:9). However, the closest parallels to the phrase "companion of her youth" suggest the idea of "mate." For example, Malachi 2:14-16 reads:

You ask, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was a witness between you and the wife of your youth (אִשְׁתְּ נַעֲרֶיךָ), to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion (חַבֵּרְתְּךָ) and your wife by covenant. Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit are his. And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth (בְּאִשְׁתְּ נַעֲרֶיךָ). (2:14-15, NRSV)⁷⁶

Consequently, the meaning of the phrase "companion of her youth" that is most suitable to the context of Proverbs 2 is "husband."

How does the alien woman's abandonment of her husband relate to the second line of verse 17: "and forgets the covenant of her God"? There are several possibilities. The rhetor may be referring to God as a witness to the woman's marriage covenant (cf. Mal 2:14), God's covenantal command against adultery (cf. Exod 20:14),⁷⁷ or the general sacredness of marriage.⁷⁸ These are all equally valid

⁷⁵ So Toy, *Proverbs*, 46; Scott, *Proverbs*, 43; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 55-56; Kidner, *Proverbs*, 62; and Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 44. Cf. McKane, *Proverbs*, 286.

⁷⁶ Cf. Petersen's identification (*Zechariah and Malachi*, 202-203) of the husband in Malachi 2 as Yahweh. See also, Jeremiah 3:4, 19-20.

⁷⁷ Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 17.

possibilities. However, what is most significant for identifying this woman is the appellation "her God." This phrase denotes that the alien woman is part of the rhetor's religious community because the rhetor considers it a bad thing for her to forget the covenant of her God! Exogamy is not the issue. If it were, forgetting the covenant of her God, presumably, would be a good thing.

The rhetor promises that his teaching will save the son from this alien woman, a member of the Israelite community who has left her husband ("the companion of her youth") and in the process has rejected religious norms ("the covenant of her God"). This rather straightforward identification is followed by metaphorical language that describes this woman and those who follow her. She, and especially her seductive rhetoric ("smooth words," v. 16), poses a lethal threat to the son. Her house is a point of no return (2:19); it entraps and pulls her guests into the grave (2:18). No one who is seduced by this woman will return to life among the living (2:19b). What, then, is this danger? The imagery suggests that the concern of the rhetor is an illicit sexual relationship with this woman. For example, Newsom submits that "house" is a common symbolic representation of woman or womb.⁷⁹ If so, the phrase "her house is *a pit* [leading down] to death" (v. 18, emphasis mine) graphically refers to the act of sexual intercourse grabbing and pulling the man into the realm of the dead. The phrase "none of those who *go into her* will return" (v. 19, emphasis mine; cf. Gen 38:16-18, Jud 15:1) also suggests the idea of intercourse. Again, all who penetrate

⁷⁸ Toy, *Proverbs*, 47.

⁷⁹ Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 149.

this woman will be captured and die. Such death, however, appears to be social, not physical. Those who enter this woman "will not catch up to the ways of the living" (v. 19). This statement is a truism if the threat is physical death. Thus, the rhetor warns the pupil who thinks he can taste this woman's pleasures, but escape the social death or ostracism that she has incurred by the designation "alien woman."

The proof, then, identifies two threats to the well being of the pupil, namely, the evil men who abandon the right way to walk on perverted and dark paths and who speak perversion, and the alien woman who abandons her husband and walks on paths that descend to death and who speaks flattery.⁸⁰ Again, these stanzas do not warn the son to avoid these pitfalls. Rather, the rhetor promises that adherence to his instruction will rescue the son from these dangers.

The lecture concludes with a concise⁸¹ enthymematic summary appeal introduced by לְמַעַן, ("therefore" or "in order that," 2:20).⁸² The conclusion of the enthymeme is stated first: the listener ("you") should devote his life to goodness and righteousness (2:20). The major premise of this conclusion is elided: It is good to live in the land. The minor premise is supplied (introduced by כִּי, "for" or "because,"

⁸⁰ Overland ("Literary Structure in Proverbs 1-9," 275-276) suggests that the two ways are a merism for all danger.

⁸¹ Overland (Ibid., 284-285) comments, "the brevity of the summary accounts for its primary rhetorical asset. While the pupil may not recall intricacies of the preceding discourse, he certainly will grasp the summary. Its brevity assures comprehension and retention. With the compressed summary the sage puts the question to the pupil one last time, leaving him to decide whether he will opt to pursue wisdom."

⁸² Again, like the infinitival clauses of 2:12-15 and 16-19, the syntactical connection of לְמַעַן "hangs in the air" (Whybray, *Proverbs*, 57). In its concluding position, the reference seems to be to the entire lecture and especially the proposition of 2:1-4.

2:21): The upright and blameless will dwell in the land, but the wicked and faithless will be expelled from it (2:21-22). This premise is not defended, but apparently based on some tradition accepted by the pupil (see below, on Ethos).

How does this conclusion relate to the proposition of 2:1-4 to accept and energetically pursue the father's teaching? On the one hand, verse 20 may be a synopsis of the father's teaching that the son should accept and pursue, namely, to do good and live righteously. On the other hand, the conclusion may offer a restatement of the proposition utilizing the key terms used to describe the evil men and alien woman, namely "paths" and "ways." In this reading, the path of goodness and the ways of righteousness are those paths and ways in which the teaching of the rhetor will lead the student.

b. Ethos

The ethos of the rhetor is of at least moderate concern in this lecture. To wit, the rhetor utilizes four different devices to establish his credibility. The first device, namely the vocative "my son" (2:1), asserts the rhetor's position of authority over the son/pupil. The second device, namely the use of formal (poetic) language, further establishes this hierarchical social standing by demonstrating the rhetor's proficiency in elitist language and associating his teaching with past values (see above).

In addition to these devices the rhetor builds his ethos by closely associating his words with God's words. For example, he appeals to the son to receive "my words" and treasure "my commandments" (2:1), which he immediately identifies as wisdom, understanding, and insight (2:2-3). Then, in the first apodosis (2:5-8), the

rhetoꝛ associates these concepts with Yahweh. Whereas in the protasis, the rhetor had urged the son to pay attention to *his* wisdom (2:2), now, in the apodosis, he asserts that such wisdom comes from Yahweh (2:6). In the protasis, the rhetor implored the son to incline his heart to the understanding that he teaches (2:2). Now he claims that Yahweh is the source of understanding (2:6). By these associations, the rhetor identifies his teaching, wisdom, understanding, and insight as not only originating from God, but as synonymous with God's wisdom, understanding and insight. Thus, the lecture appropriates the audience's respect for Yahweh (i.e., Yahweh's ethos) for the ethos of the father.⁸³

The presence of a fourth device in this lecture for building the rhetor's ethos is widely debated. Put simply, does this lecture utilize texts and/or traditions from Israel's religious heritage in an effort to bolster the rhetor's ethos? Typically, this question falls within the realm of traditio-historical study. On one side of this debate, some scholars assert that Proverbs 2 has been significantly influenced by deuteronomistic texts. For example, Maier claims that the pedagogy of Proverbs 2, as well as the other lectures, carries on "the historical paranesis of Deuteronomy."⁸⁴ Further, Proverbs 2 makes "anthological references" (*anthologischen Bezugnahmen*) to deuteronomistic texts. To take one specific example, according to Maier, two unusual expressions in Proverbs 2:17 refer to earlier texts: 1) Jeremiah 3:4 and 13:21 stand

⁸³ See also, McKane, *Proverbs*, 281.

⁸⁴ Maier, *Die 'Fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*, 262.

behind **נעריה אל וף**, and 2) **ברית־אלהיה** takes up the deuteronomistic concern for forgetting the covenant (Deut 4:23, 31).⁸⁵

In a similar thesis, Robert identifies numerous similarities between the style and vocabulary of Proverbs 1-9 and deuteronomistic literature. For example, 1) he claims that the expression "*habiter la terre*" (**יִשְׁכְּנוּ־אָרֶץ**, 2:21) is uniquely deuteronomistic and that obedience to Yahweh as a condition of remaining in the land is a feature of Deuteronomy (4:10, 5:16,33, 6:18, 11:9, 15:4, 5, 16:20, 17:20, 22:7, 25:7, 25:15, 32:47).⁸⁶ 2) Robert observes that the terms "righteousness, justice, and uprightness" (**צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט וּמִיִּשְׁרָיִם**, 2:9; especially righteousness and justice) are frequently found in the prophets (Isa 9:7, 32:16, 33:5, 59:9, Jer 4:2, 9:24, 22:3, 15, 23:5, 33:15, etc.).⁸⁷ On the basis of these and other "connections" (*attaches*), he concludes that the author of Proverbs 1-9 used the books of Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and Isaiah.⁸⁸

On the other side of this debate, scholars such as McKane not only question the literary dependence of Proverbs 1-9 on Deuteronomy, but propose a reversed (Proverbs 1-9 influenced Deuteronomy) or reciprocal relationship.⁸⁹ As I mentioned in chapter 2, the adjudication of this traditio-historical debate is well beyond the limits of

⁸⁵ Maier (ibid., 98-99) describes these as "*punktueller Bezugnahmen auf fruhere Texte*."

⁸⁶ Robert, "Les Attaches Litteraires Bibliques de Prov. I-IX," 62-63

⁸⁷ Ibid., 61

⁸⁸ Ibid., 44: 345

⁸⁹ McKane, *Proverbs*, 279-280.

this dissertation. Here, in view of the present uncertainty, two tentative observations are in order: 1) The statements about living in the land (2:21-22) are introduced into the rhetoric as part of common knowledge or belief. The rhetor does not defend these statements, but assumes that the audience already accepts these truths. Thus, the rhetor appears to rely on some well-known tradition (or text) about the land in 2:21-22.⁹⁰ 2) This apparent use of traditions (or texts) has implications for the ethos of the speaker. To the degree that the rhetor employs traditions that are known and accepted by the audience, and this is the case at least in 2:21-22, he bolsters both his argument and his ethos. His claims are not his own, but those of the community's heritage.

c. Pathos

Scholars, because of their lack of interest in rhetoric, have given scant attention to the use of pathetic appeals in this lecture.⁹¹ Here, the speaker does not hesitate to stimulate the audience's emotions in order to persuade them to accept his proposition. To this end, he uses two basic pathetic devices, namely the promise of blessing and the threat of disaster.

In his promises of blessing, the rhetor appeals to four desires or passions in his audience. First, he recognizes and stimulates their desire to "understand" Yahweh and discover "the knowledge of God" (2:5). This understanding or knowledge does not simply refer to intellectual or theological astuteness, but a relationship with God.

⁹⁰ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 45. See Deut 8:1,19-20, 30:11-20, Ps 69:3:5-36, Zech 13:8, Ps 37.

⁹¹ This lack of attention to the role of pathos in persuasion is not only true of exegeses of this lecture, but of all the lectures.

Thus, the rhetor solicits interest in his teaching by asserting its value for fulfilling the audience's desire for a proper relationship to Yahweh.

Second, the rhetor draws on the son's desire to think clearly and successfully in practical operations (2:7a). The Hebrew term translated "sound judgment" (תִּשְׁפִּיחַ) generally refers to the results of efficient wisdom, namely good results or abiding success.⁹² Here, this ability is attributed to Yahweh's blessing. Thus, the son's passion for efficient accomplishment becomes a suasive device: The rhetor's instruction will lead the pupil to Yahweh (2:5), the source of clear and powerful thinking (2:7).

Third, the speaker claims that his teaching will fulfill the son's need for security. This pathetic appeal is stressed twice in the lecture. The rhetor describes Yahweh as a shield who guards justice and the paths of his faithful ones (2:7b-8). And similarly, the speaker asserts that the prudence and understanding gained from listening to him will watch over and guard the son (2:11). This stress on security as a benefit of the teacher's instruction suggests that security was a major concern of the pupil and thus became a primary source for the pathetic appeal of the rhetor.⁹³

⁹² תִּשְׁפִּיחַ occurs 11 times in the Old Testament: four times in Proverbs (2:7, 3:21, 8:14, 18:1), five times in Job (5:12, 6:13, 11:6, 12:16, 26:3), once in Isa (28:29), and once in Micah (6:9). In these texts תִּשְׁפִּיחַ is closely associated (usually in parallel constructions) with three basic ideas: 1) counsel, wisdom, and discretion (e.g., "he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in תִּשְׁפִּיחַ," Isa 28:29; see also, Prov 3:21, Job 11:6, 26:3), 2) a type of action or lifestyle (e.g., "The one who lives alone is self-indulgent, showing contempt for all who have תִּשְׁפִּיחַ," Prov 18:1 [NRSV]; see also, Job 5:12), and 3) strength (e.g., "with him are strength and תִּשְׁפִּיחַ," Job 12:16; see also, Prov 8:14). Thus the divine gift of תִּשְׁפִּיחַ consists of God's counsel for wise and strong or successful activity. See BDB 444; KB 1024-25; John F. Genung, "Meaning and Usage of the Term תִּשְׁפִּיחַ," *JBL* 30 (1911): 114-122; and Michael Fox, "Words for Wisdom," *ZAH* 6 (1993): 161-65.

⁹³ The cause of this insecurity is uncertain. It may be due to the son's position in the process of maturation or social instability due to external threats.

The fourth passion to which the rhetor appeals is the son's desire for an ability to discern what is morally good or expedient. He claims that accepting and pursuing his teaching will provide the student with an ability to discern every good track, namely what is righteous, just, and upright (2:9). This claim may suggest that the moral values of the son were under fire from rival groups (e.g., the evil men and the alien woman), and that this attack was causing the son some discomfort.⁹⁴ If so, the rhetor taps this distress to strengthen the suasive claim of his proposition: Listen to me and you will be able to discern confidently what is morally good.

In addition to these promises that invoke the desires of his audience, the rhetor also makes use of threats that tap their fears. However, as Fox points out, the object of fear is not the father, the parent's wrath, or corporal punishment.⁹⁵ Rather, the rhetor draws upon the pupil's fear of evil men and seeks to instill a greater fear of the alien woman.

First, he appeals to his son's fear of the evil path and the person who speaks perversely. The rhetor does not articulate the consequences of such a lifestyle, rather he assumes the son's fear of such people and the son's recognition of a need to be rescued from them (2:12-15). Thus, the speaker strengthens his proposal by drawing on this fear; the teacher's instruction provides a way of escape from evil men.

⁹⁴ Although suggestive, the evidence is not conclusive on this point. It is possible that this concern is more reflective of the rhetor's passion and the moral threat he perceives in the rhetoric of the evil men and alien woman.

⁹⁵ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 243.

Second, the rhetor seeks to instill in the son a fear of the alien woman (2:16-19). Unlike his reference to the evil men, here the speaker not only describes the alien woman, but warns the son about the lethal consequences of falling prey to her (2:18-19). The son may already have been afraid of this woman, but the rhetor attempts to intensify this fear by denouncing her "house" as the entrance to death, the path to irreversible social death.⁹⁶ Again, this pathetic device supports the rhetor's proposition to listen to his instruction because only it will rescue the pupil from this deadly fate (2:16).

Finally, the summary conclusion of the lecture draws upon the son's desire to continue living in the land (2:21-22). This pathetic appeal begins in a positive manner ("the upright will inhabit the land and the blameless will remain in it," 2:21), but quickly turns negative ("but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the faithless will be torn away from it," 2:22). Whether the rhetor is referring to historical events from the life of the community (i.e., the exile), present social instability, or both, is difficult to determine from this promise/threat.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, he does appear to be addressing a vital concern of the son, namely a secure propertied life in the land. Further, because of the traditional association of Yahweh with the land, this promise/threat also invokes the fear of losing divine favor.⁹⁸ Again, the rhetor draws

⁹⁶ See also, Whybray, *Proverbs*, 56.

⁹⁷ If this pathetic appeal is based on the deuteronomistic tradition (see above on Ethos), it is significant that here the promise/threat is not directed to the nation as a whole, but to the individual.

⁹⁸ Toy, *Proverbs*, 52.

on this passion to support his proposition: His instruction is insurance against losing possession of the land and losing divine favor.

An honor and shame social system may lie beneath and empower both the promises and threats made by the rhetor in this lecture, as well as those in other lectures. According to cultural anthropologists such as Peristiany, Mediterranean societies were ordered on the basis of honor and shame. In this social system, "honor" and "shame" defined the status of a household and, thus, provided a touchstone for motivating acceptable behavior among members of the community.⁹⁹ This foundation for Proverbs, however, has been recently challenged by Domeris. After assessing the presence of "honor" and "shame" terminology in Proverbs, Domeris concludes that the absence of the typical Mediterranean honor and shame categories is "striking."¹⁰⁰ Instead, "the astute reader soon realises [sic] that the dominant value is wisdom and

⁹⁹ Matthews and Benjamin provide helpful definitions of honor and shame and their significance for an honor and shame social system.

Honor entitled a household to life. Honorable households ate moderately, did not get drunk, worked hard, made good friends, sought advice before acting, held their temper, paid their taxes, and imposed fair legal judgements. They were careful in dealing with one another during menstruation, sexual intercourse, childbirth, and death . . . Honorable households could care for their own members and were prepared to help their neighbors. They were households in good standing, licensed to make a living in the village and entitled to its support . . . Shame sentenced a household to death by placing its land and children in jeopardy. Shamed households ate too much, drank too much, were lazy, quarrelsome, selfish, and thought nothing about lying to the village assembly. They were thoughtless in their sexual relationships, and disrespectful of the new born and the dead . . . Shamed households did not fulfill their responsibilities to their own members or their neighbors. Shamed households were on probation. They were out-of-place and not functioning properly. ("Social Sciences and Biblical Studies," *Semeia* 68 (1996): 11-12)

These definitions, in many respects, mirror the concerns of the ten lectures, e.g., responsible sexual relationships (5:1-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27) and proper conduct toward neighbors (3:27.-31).

¹⁰⁰ W. R. Domeris, "Shame and honour in Proverbs: Wise women and foolish men," OTE 8 (1995) 96.

the contrasting object is folly. As such, wisdom and folly define all other values, including shame and honour.”¹⁰¹ Domeris also points out another difference between the honor and shame Mediterranean social system and Proverbs 1-9, namely, the economic, sexual, and leadership roles of women. According to Domeris, the women in Proverbs 1-9 exhibit a freedom in these roles which the women in a Mediterranean value system would have found intimidating.¹⁰² Consequently, although some type of honor and shame value system may empower the rhetoric of this and other lectures, this conclusion is presently under debate by specialists in cultural anthropology and, thus, held in abeyance in this dissertation.¹⁰³

4. Summary & Conclusions

This lecture, like 1:8-19, arises from an educational relationship of a teacher and his pupil(s). Within this setting, again like 1:8-19, the rhetorical problem faced by the teacher is the acquisition of his pupil's full attention. Thus, the proposition or aim of this lecture is to persuade the pupil to accept and vigorously pursue his instructor's teaching (cf. 1:8-9). Here, it is possible that at issue is the pupil's desire to give up on the rhetor's wisdom because of the lack of immediate benefits. The pupil must be patient, as the medieval Jewish commentator Sa'adia Gaon summarizes, "for its

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰² Ibid., 99.

¹⁰³ I will denote possible references to honor and shame in the remaining lectures with the hope that this data will be of some help to those the studying honor and shame in Proverbs 1-9.

[wisdom] beginnings are wearisome, but if you work through them, you will later arrive at lasting satisfaction and joy and happiness.”¹⁰⁴

The rhetor fully utilizes all three means of artistic proof in the service of his proposition. Logically, the rhetor casts the proposition in the form of a conditional sentence in which he asserts that if the son will accept his instruction he will enjoy a close relationship with Yahweh and become the beneficiary of Yahweh's blessings (2:1-11). Therefore, in the proof, the speaker contends that his teaching will rescue the pupil from evil men (2:12-15) and the alien woman (2:16-19). The rhetor supports this logical argument with language that appeals to the student's emotions, both aspirations and fears. He asserts that his teaching will fulfill the pupil's desire for a relationship with Yahweh, success, security, and discernment. He also claims that his instruction will deliver his student from his fears (i.e., the evil men and loss of the land) or what he should fear (i.e., the alien woman). Finally, the lecture develops and uses the ethos of the rhetor to bolster both the logical and emotional devices. Much of the rhetor's ethos is external to the speech, i.e., his preexistent relationship to the pupil. Nonetheless, the rhetor enhances his credibility and authority in this lecture by means of formal language, the close association of his teaching with Yahweh, and use of the community's religious traditions.

Although the method of argumentation in the proof of 2:1-22 differs from that of 1:8-19, these speeches share a common rhetorical feature that sets them apart from most of the other lectures. Their primary objective is the acquisition of the student's

¹⁰⁴ As cited and translated by Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 242.

complete and devoted attention. Unlike other lectures (e.g., 4:20-27), the speaker does not call for the son's attention as a prelude to specific teaching, nor do these two lectures advance any specific instruction. Instead, in 1:8-19 and 2:1-22, the call for apprenticeship comprises the entire lecture. The contrast of this rhetorical form to the other lectures will become clearer in chapters 4 and 5. However, before turning to other subsets, the rhetoric of two other lectures (4:1-9, 4:10-19) requires their inclusion in this class of calls to apprenticeship.¹⁰⁵

Proverbs 4:1-9

1. Text and Translation

- 4:1 Listen, Oh sons, to a father's discipline
and pay attention to the knowledge of insight.
- 4:2 Since I give good instruction to you,
do not abandon my teaching.
- 4:3 For I was a son of my father,
delicate and alone before my mother,
- 4:4 and he taught me and said to me,
"Let your heart grasp my speech;
Keep my commandments and live.
- 4:5 Acquire wisdom, acquire insight
do not forget and do not turn aside from the words of my mouth.
- 4:6 Do not abandon her and she will guard you
love her and she will protect you.
- 4:7 Wisdom is supreme: Acquire wisdom,¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ The term "apprenticeship" is from Aletti ("Seduction et Parole en Proverbes I-IX," 137-138, 144). He describes the problem confronting the sage of Proverbs 1-9, and the book of Proverbs as a whole, as the temptation that "one may find happiness and prosperity other than by becoming an apprentice of the sage" (137). Thus, it seems appropriate to designate this first subset of lectures as "Calls to Apprenticeship."

¹⁰⁶ The MT **קִנְיָה חִכְמָה** and its relationship to the following imperative (**קִנְיָה חִכְמָה**, "get wisdom") is ambiguous. The problem is that, if left unemended, the MT requires the reader to fill a syntactical gap. Scholars have proposed four basic translations: 1) "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom" (NIV, supplying "therefore") or "Wisdom comes first,

- and among all your property, acquire insight.
 4:8 Cherish her and she will exalt you
 she will honor you because you embrace her.
 4:9 She will put on your head a wreath of honor
 a beautiful crown she will bestow on you."

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

The initial verse of this text (4:1) distinguishes itself as the beginning of a new rhetorical unit in three ways. 1) It utilizes the customary introductory formula, namely, **בני** + "hear" (**שמע**) and "pay attention" (**קשב**).¹⁰⁷ 2) It addresses a plurality of listeners rather than the singular audience of 3:21-35. 3) It introduces a different theme and rhetorical strategy from that of 3:21-35. In addition, the conclusion of the previous lecture in 3:33-35 also denotes the beginning of a new rhetorical unit in 4:1 (see chp. 4).

This lecture lacks a concluding summary appeal (e.g., 1:19, 2:20-22). Instead, its ending is primarily denoted by the beginning of a new lecture in 4:10 (4:10-19). That 4:10 is a beginning, not a resumption of 4:1-9, is demonstrated by: 1) the

(therefore) get Wisdom" (McKane, *Proverbs*, 216; cf. AV, also supplying "therefore"), 2) "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom" (NRSV, cf. NJV, supplying "is this"), 3) "The beginning of wisdom? The acquisition of wisdom" (JB, supplying the interrogative and changing the imperative to a nominal clause), and 4) emending the MT to read **בראשית חילך** ("at the first of your wealth acquire wisdom," Scott, *Proverbs*, 49).

The third and fourth proposals lack any textual support for their revisions and may thus be dismissed. The first two proposals are equally plausible. The syntactical connection defined by these proposals is essentially the same: because wisdom is supreme, the pupil should acquire wisdom, or because the beginning of wisdom is to acquire wisdom, the pupil should decide to get wisdom (so Kidner, *Proverbs*, 67). I prefer the first translation ("Wisdom is supreme") because it is more forceful and avoids the tautology of the second translation ("The beginning of wisdom").

¹⁰⁷ In the lectures, these terms (**שמע** and **קשב**) always introduce a new speech (1:8, 2:2, 4:1, 4:10, 4:20, 5:1). They are never part of resumptive clauses.

presence of the customary introductory term "hear" (שִׁמְעוּ), 2) the address to a singular audience, rather than the plural audience of 4:1-2, and 3) the introduction of a new theme and yet another rhetorical strategy (see below).

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

Although the limits of the rhetorical unit are clear, two features of 4:1-9 raise the question of whether this text is a complete rhetorical unit or an extended proem now devoid of the speech that it once introduced.¹⁰⁸ First, while the rhetor appeals at length for the reception and retention of his words, this text lacks any explication of his instruction. Second, this lecture ends abruptly in 4:9.

It is possible that 4:1-9 is a speech fragment or extended proem.¹⁰⁹ However, three factors recommend the analysis of this text as a complete rhetorical unit. First, this text is not unique in its lack of explicit instruction. Three other lectures make similar appeals to listen to the teaching of the rhetor without explicating his teaching, namely the calls to apprenticeship (i.e., my group I: 1:8-19, 2:1-22, 4:10-19). Of these lectures, I have already demonstrated the rhetorical completeness of 1:8-19 and 2:1-22 (on 4:10-19 see below). Thus, the lack of explicit teaching is not in itself sufficient grounds for reading 4:1-9 as a rhetorical fragment. Second, even if 4:1-9 were a speech fragment, the editor has included it in this collection as a complete rhetorical

¹⁰⁸ Others have identified this matter of literary history, but offered no resolution (e.g., Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 45). It is possible to raise the same question about 1:8-19 and 2:1-22 since they also lack any explicit instruction. However, unlike the abrupt ending of 4:1-9, these two lectures conclude with clear summary appeals (1:19, 2:20-22).

¹⁰⁹ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 234 n. 5.

unit (see the delimitation above). Third, rhetorical analysis will reveal a coherent and complete argument in 4:1-9.

Thus, the problem posed by the lack of teaching and the abrupt ending of this lecture is more the result of inflexible form criticism than the lecture itself.¹¹⁰

Rhetorical analysis will show that 4:1-9 is another deliberative speech seeking the devoted attention of its audience. The rhetorical strategy developed by the rhetor to achieve this objective in 4:1-9 is different from other lectures seeking this same goal. Nonetheless, like 1:8-19 and 2:1-22, the principle aim of this lecture is to persuade the son to accept the call to apprenticeship.

a. Logos

The rhetorical force of this lecture does not lie in its rational argument. Rather, the deliberative arrangement of the lecture provides a cohesive framework for developing strong pathetic (pathos) and ethical (ethos) arguments.

Proem: 4:1a

Proposition: 4:1-2

Proof: 4:3-9

The proem consists of the vocative "sons" (בְּנֵיִם) and the rhetor's reference to himself as "a father" (אָבִי, 4:1). This proem differs from the previous lectures in two ways: 1) the typical suffixes are absent in 4:1, i.e., "my" (sons, 4:1a) and "your" (father, 4:1a), and 2) 4:1 uses the plural "sons" rather than the singular. Rhetorically,

¹¹⁰ E.g., Whybray (*Proverbs*, 75), although he calls 4:1-9 an instruction, describes the text as an "introduction" and suggests that "it may be a fragment of a longer piece, lacking the whole original body of the Instruction."

these are important variants.¹¹¹ The close rhetorical relationship presupposed by both previous lectures is two steps removed in this lecture. The speaker does not address the audience as an individual or claim an immediate relationship to them. Rather, the rhetorical relationship is more distant, a key factor that influences the ensuing rhetoric.

The initial statement of the proposition uses the same imperatives and objects found in the propositions of 1:8-19 and 2:1-22.

Hear (שִׁמַע, 1:8), Oh sons, a father's discipline (מוֹשֵׁר, 1:8)
and pay attention (קִשֹּׁב, 2:2) to the knowledge of insight (בִּינָה, 2:3). (4:1)

Consequently, the proposition of this lecture is essentially the same as the propositions of these previous lectures: The student should carefully listen to and receive the rhetor's instruction. Next, the rhetor supplies an initial reason for accepting this proposition, namely "since I give *good* (טוֹב) instruction to you" (v. 4:2a, emphasis mine). He does not immediately defend this statement, i.e., explain why his instruction is good. Rather, this claim will be the subject of the proof. Finally, the rhetor restates the proposition: "do not abandon my teaching" (v. 2b).

The remainder of the text (4:4-9) consists of a single proof offered in support of the rhetor's appeal for the student's attention, namely, the citation of the speech of the father's father (hence "the grandfather").¹¹² The rhetor introduces the grandfather's speech by describing the rhetorical situation in which the speech was delivered.

¹¹¹ Others claim that the plurals and the lack of personal pronouns are insignificant (e.g., Toy, *Proverbs*, 84; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 76).

¹¹² I am unaware of any other instruction in the Old Testament or in the Wisdom Literature of the ancient Near East in which the father/rhetor cites the speech of his father/teacher.

I was a son of my father,
 delicate and alone before my mother
 and he taught me and said to me, (4:3-4a)

Read superficially, the first line is a truism. However, this statement achieves a powerful rhetorical effect by establishing rapport between the rhetor and his audience. Once, the rhetor claims, he was like his audience of "sons," i.e., he was a "son" who received the instruction of his father/teacher (see below on Ethos). The second line further defines the rhetor's situation: He was a beloved child of his mother. As pointed out by almost every exegete of this passage, this line strongly suggests a familial setting for the speech of the grandfather.¹¹³ Then, the third line (4:4a) directly introduces the grandfather's speech.

The beginning of the grandfather's speech is clearly demarcated by the rhetor's introduction (4:4). However, at what point do the words of the grandfather cease? Close reading, with special attention to pronouns, resolves this question. The rhetor

¹¹³ Three caveats must be raised against this near unanimous interpretation. 1) Although the mother is mentioned in 4:3, it is the teaching of the father's father that is cited in 4:4b-9. The rhetor simply claims that when he was instructed by the grandfather, he was a beloved child of his mother. Thus, although strongly suggestive of a familial setting, this line does not rule out the possibility of an educational setting outside the home. 2) It must not be assumed that the setting of the grandfather's speech coincides with the setting of the rhetor's speech (e.g., Farmer, *Who Knows*, 39; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 58-59). This assumption stems from a failure to take seriously the differences between this lecture and previous lectures (e.g., singular to plural address, personal pronouns to no personal pronouns). 3) The Book of Kemit (*Letters from Ancient Egypt*, SBLWAW 1, trans. Edward F. Wente, ed. Edmund S. Meltzer [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 16) contains a similar statement: "I am one beloved of his father, praised of his mother, and beloved of his brothers and sisters. I never perturbed my father, nor did I show disregard to my mother. I repeat what my instructor said so as to master temperament." It is of some interest that the writer mentions his instructor apart from his father and mother. The similarity of this text to Proverbs 4:3 raises the possibility that "he taught me" (4:4) may refer to the "father's discipline" that the rhetor introduced in the proposition (4:1), not the biological father/mother of 4:3. Admittedly, these caveats do not overturn the consensus position of a familial setting for Proverbs 4:3-4, but they do temper any absolute claims regarding the setting of the grandfather's speech.

consistently addresses his audience with plural pronouns (4:1-2), but the grandfather addresses a singular audience with singular pronouns (4:4). Singular pronouns, and thus the grandfather's speech, continue through the end of the lecture (4:9).¹¹⁴

Nonetheless, there is a sense in which the speech of the grandfather merges into and becomes the speech of the rhetor. In fact, this rhetorical effect appears to be a key reason for the inclusion of the citation, namely, to identify or equate the words of the rhetor with the speech of the grandfather. Thus, what the grandfather told the rhetor, the rhetor is now telling the sons.

The grandfather's speech lacks a proem. Instead, his speech begins with a proposition similar in content and form to that of the rhetor: "Let your heart grasp my words; Keep my commandments" (v. 4bc). To this propositional statement, the grandfather adds an initial reason to accept his words, namely, "and live" (v. 4e). He then restates the proposition in both positive and negative terms: "Acquire wisdom, acquire insight; do not forget and do not turn aside from the words of my mouth" (v. 5). Thus, the aim of the grandfather's rhetoric is the acceptance and retention of *his* teaching ("my words," "my commandments," "the words of my mouth"), the same proposition offered by the rhetor in 4:1-2 (and 1:8-9, 2:1-11).

In order to convince the son to accept this proposition, the grandfather personifies his teaching as a woman and enumerates the benefits of becoming her

¹¹⁴ For example, the grandfather begins his speech, "Let your heart (לִבְךָ, singular noun and suffix) grasp my words, Keep my commandments (שְׁמֹר, singular imperative) and live (חַיֵּךְ, singular imperative)" (4:4). This use of singular pronouns continues through verse 9: "She will put on your head (לְרֹאשְׁךָ, singular noun and pronoun) a wreath of honor, a beautiful crown she will bestow on you (תַּמְנִי, singular noun and pronoun)."

disciple or protege. The grandfather lays the groundwork for this strategy in his proposition where he subtly equates "my words" and "my commandments" (4:4) with "wisdom" and "insight" (4:5).¹¹⁵ Then, in the proof, the grandfather describes "wisdom" and "insight" as a woman whom the son should love, not abandon, acquire, cherish, and embrace (4:6, 8). Admittedly, these imperatives do not require a personified object, i.e., "her" rather than "it." However, they do suggest this possibility, which is confirmed by the grandfather's description of how wisdom/insight will respond to the love and embrace of the son. She will guard, protect, exalt, and honor the son (4:6, 8, 9, see below on Pathos).

The conclusion of the grandfather's speech coincides with the conclusion of the rhetor's lecture. Both speeches end with the promise of woman wisdom/insight bestowing laurels upon the son(s) because of his pursuit of the rhetor's/grandfather's teaching (4:9). The arrangement of the lecture, then, is straightforward. The rhetor identifies his teaching with the instruction of the grandfather. The grandfather equates his words with wisdom and insight and then personifies these ideals as a woman. Thus, the rhetor's citation of the grandfather's speech equates his words not only with the grandfather's, but with wisdom and insight. However, while the rational development of this argument is clear, the rhetorical force of this strategy does not lie

¹¹⁵ For example, he says:

Acquire wisdom, acquire insight,

do not forget and do not turn aside from the words of my mouth. (4:5)

Here, the acquisition of wisdom and insight is parallel to not forgetting and not turning aside from the words of the grandfather. Thus, by means of parallel structure, the grandfather equates his own teaching to wisdom and insight. At this point he does not yet personify these concepts. Rather, here they are objects to be bought or acquired (קנה) by diligent pursuit.

in its logical strength. Logically, the rhetor offers no examples or enthymemes in support of his or his father's proposition. Rather, the suasiveness of this lecture relies on proofs from the ethos and pathos developed by this citation.

b. Ethos

I have already argued, based on the plural address ("sons") and the lack of personal pronouns in the proem, that the rhetorical relationship envisioned by this lecture is more distant than that of 1:8-19 and 2:1-22. This distance is further demonstrated by the special concern in 4:1-9 to develop the ethos of the speaker. In addition to the two artifices for developing ethos common to all the lectures, namely, the vocative "sons"¹¹⁶ and the use of formal language, the rhetor develops three new devices to establish his credibility.

First, the rhetor introduces himself to the "sons" (4:1) as a "son of my father" (4:3). In other words, he steps away from his role as "a father" (4:1) and seeks to identify himself with his audience. Like the audience, he was once a "son" who received the instruction of his father/teacher. Thus, he claims experiential knowledge of what it is like to receive instruction and, more, he subtly offers himself as an example of one who faithfully received such instruction.¹¹⁷ This is a daring and, if

¹¹⁶ The rhetor does address his audience as "sons" and refer to himself as "a father," thus asserting some formal relationship of authority. However, again, the lack of first person (e.g., "my" sons) and second person pronouns (e.g., "your" father) in the proem cause this claim to ethos to be weaker than preceding claims because it does not assert an immediate or personal relationship.

¹¹⁷ These observations are not new (e.g., Toy, *Proverbs*, 85; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 29; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 76), however, the rhetorical significance of this claim has hardly been noticed.

successful, powerful rhetorical strategy. He approaches the audience as an outsider seeking admission into their circle of trust on the basis of a common bond. If successful, the audience of sons will accept the rhetor as one of their own. But, if rejected, there is little hope for the rhetor salvaging his credibility or his proposition.

The second device the rhetor uses for establishing his credibility is the citation of the grandfather's speech. Here, the rhetor seeks to establish his reputation as a faithful tradent of wisdom. He is not the originator of his teaching, but the transmitter of wisdom.¹¹⁸ In other words, he attempts to establish the goodness of his instruction (תִּזְכֹּר, 4:2)¹¹⁹ by identifying its source. On the one hand, the rhetor's citation of any speech would accomplish this goal. On the other hand, this particular speech offers even more. First, this speech is significantly longer (12 lines plus 3 introductory lines) than the actual words of the rhetor (4 lines). Thus, the citation not only identifies the source of the rhetor's teaching, but signals the importance attributed to tradition by the rhetor. Second, this citation affirms the trustworthiness of the rhetor as a tradent. For example, his proposition is not new or innovative, but essentially identical to that of the grandfather.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Farmer, *Who Knows*, 39; Aletti, "Seduction et Parole," 141.

¹¹⁹ Van Leeuwen ("The Book of Proverbs," 58) points out that this term (תִּזְכֹּר) "connotes something received from another, something handed on, accepted, and finally made one's own by the recipient."

¹²⁰ The rhetor appeals to the sons to "pay attention to the knowledge of insight" (4:1), fundamentally the same appeal made twice by the grandfather, "acquire insight" (4:5,7). Since the actual teaching of the rhetor and the grandfather are not explicated, it is impossible to carry this comparison any further. Nonetheless, what the rhetor says in 4:1-2 is substantially the same thing said, at greater length, by the grandfather in 4:4-9.

Third, the logical progression by which the rhetor equates his instruction with wisdom/insight is an effective strategy for producing ethos. As I have already observed, the rhetor first equates his teaching with the teaching of the grandfather, and then the grandfather equates his instruction with wisdom/insight. Thus, the rhetor identifies his teaching as coterminous with wisdom and insight. However, due to the tentativeness of the rhetorical relationship, this is necessarily a subtle and indirect transference of ideas. The rhetor does not explicitly claim that his instruction is good because it is "wisdom" or "insight." Rather, he states that his words offer "the knowledge of insight" (4:1), and then subtly suggests that his teaching is wisdom and insight by his series of equations.

c. Pathos

This lecture evokes the emotions of the sons in two distinct ways, both in the speech of the grandfather. First, the rhetor makes a direct appeal to the desires or passions of the son. Three benefits will accompany the acceptance of the grandfather's instruction.¹²¹ 1) If his son grasps his words and keeps his commandments, he will "live" (4:4). The acquisition of life and avoidance of death is a prevalent pathetic appeal in the teaching of Israel's sages, especially in the book of Proverbs. Here, in both the lectures and sentence literature, when a sage employs "life" or "death" as a motivation for a specified behavior, the meaning is most often metaphorical, namely,

¹²¹ This lecture is completely devoid of negative pathos, i.e., the use of fear and threat. This presents a vivid contrast to the extensive use of negative pathos in 1:8-19 and 2:1-22.

genuine life or social death, not physical life and death.¹²² Thus, the grandfather's promise of "life" in 4:4 is most likely a rhetorical play on the son's passion for a productive, satisfying life, not a delusive promise of avoiding physical death.¹²³

2) The grandfather promises that the acquisition and retention of wisdom will provide the son with security. If the son loves woman wisdom/insight, she will guard and protect him (4:6).

3) There is a special emphasis on the value of wisdom for the attainment of social honor. The woman wisdom/insight will not only exalt and honor the son (4:8), she will also place a wreath of honor and a beautiful crown upon his head (4:9). Both the wreath and the crown denote the honor or social standing that will come as the result of accepting the grandfather's wisdom.¹²⁴

The second emotional ploy in this lecture involves the personification of wisdom/insight as a woman. On one hand, it is possible to explain the feminization of wisdom/insight on grammatical grounds. Both wisdom (חכמה) and insight (בִּינָה) are feminine nouns. Consequently, when personified, wisdom and insight naturally become females. On the other hand, the personification of wisdom/insight as a woman to be loved, cherished, and embraced in a lecture delivered to "sons" (i.e., males) seems to have a greater rhetorical significance than personification for mere literary

¹²² See e.g., 7:2, 9:6, 15:27 (on "life"); 2:18, 5:23, 7:27 (on "death"). Cf. 4:10.

¹²³ Kidner, *Proverbs*, 66; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 60.

¹²⁴ Whybray (*Proverbs*, 78) points out that the wearing of crowns was not limited to kings. Crowns were also worn at festal occasions (Isa 28:1), and worn as signs of honorable status (Ezek 16:12, Lam 5:16).

embellishment. Scholars concur on this point. The crucial question is how this personification intersects with the passions or desires of the sons. To wit, does the rhetor personify wisdom as a patron or a lover/wife?

The scant evidence favors the identification of woman wisdom/insight with an influential female patron, although sexual overtones cannot be ruled out.¹²⁵ 1) She has the capability of guarding and protecting the son (4:6), as well as directly bestowing social honor upon him (4:8-9). These functions are not typically attributed to wives (cf., however, Prov 31:10-31). 2) Although the imperatives "love her" (4:6b), "cherish her" (4:8a), and the indicative "you embrace her" (4:8b) permit sexual references, they do not require such a nuance.¹²⁶ 3) The reciprocity of the son's relationship with this woman further suggests a patron/client relationship. If the son does not abandon her she will guard him (4:6a), if he loves her she will protect him (4:6b), if he cherishes her she will exalt him (4:8a), and if he clings to her she will honor him (4:8b). Such

¹²⁵ Woman wisdom is clearly personified as an influential female patron in the interludes of Proverbs 1-9 (1:20-33, 8:1-36, and 9:1-12).

¹²⁶ The strongest piece of evidence in favor of understanding personified wisdom/insight as a lover or wife is the imperative to "embrace her" (עִמְּהָ). In its only other occurrence in Proverbs, this term has clear sexual overtones (5:20, "embrace the bosom of an alien woman"). This idea is further supported by Canticles 2:6 and 8:3. Nonetheless, the meaning of "clutch, hang on to," without sexual overtones, is attested in Qoheleth 3:5, Lamentations 4:5, and Job 24:8. Likewise, the imperative "love her" does not demand a sexual overtones, but may denote wholehearted devotion (8:17). In defense of personified wisdom/insight as a lover or wife, see Whybray (*Proverbs*, 77), Van Leeuwen ("The Book of Proverbs," 59) and Yee ("I Have Perfumed My Bed with Myrrh," 58)

reciprocity is a much better description of a patron/client relationship than the husband/wife relationship in ancient Israel.¹²⁷

The grandfather's personification of wisdom/insight as an influential patroness reinforces his promises of life, security, and social honor. In the rhetoric, these blessings do not come upon the sons from nowhere. Rather, these blessings come as the result of a reciprocal relationship with a powerful patron, a relationship offered by the grandfather's (and rhetor's) teaching.

4. Summary & Conclusions

The rhetorical situation of 4:1-9 is an educational setting in which an instructor addresses a group of pupils with whom he has an indirect relationship. Within this setting, the primary problem faced by the rhetor is how to acquire and maintain the attentiveness and receptivity of such an audience. The primary tool that the rhetor uses to resolve this problem is his citation of the grandfather's speech. Here, he asserts himself as a reliable receiver and transmitter of tradition and subtly equates his words with the words of the grandfather and wisdom itself. The rhetor also uses this speech to appeal directly to the sons' desires for a high quality of life, security, and the attainment of social prestige or honor. This appeal is given greater emotional depth by the personification of wisdom/insight as a female patron with the capacity of bestowing each of these benefits upon the son. Consequently, the citation of the grandfather's speech functions as rhetorical proof by establishing both the ethos of the

¹²⁷ In favor of the patron/client relationship, see McKane, *Proverbs*, 306; Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1-9*, 240-242.

speaker and identifying the rhetor's teaching as the means for acquiring the sons' desires.

This interpretation of the rhetoric of 4:1-9 significantly differs from that of most scholars. In addition to reading 4:1-9 as a complete lecture, my analysis has argued that the fundamental rhetorical problem is the speaker's lack of a direct relationship to his audience. Unlike previous lectures, he cannot assume a strong pre-existent ethos. The audience does not consist of "my" son, but "sons." Most scholars overlook this problem and consequently fail to see that it is the focal point of the entire lecture.

4:1-9 may also, therefore, be classified as a call to apprenticeship. Like 1:8-19 and 2:1-22, 4:1-9 is concerned exclusively with acquiring the attention and devotion of the audience. The specific problem addressed by this call is slightly different from 1:8-19 and 2:1-22. Here, instead of the threat of an alternative rhetoric (1:8-19) or the impatience of the son for immediate benefits (2:1-22), the rhetor must overcome a lack of ethos or credibility because of his lack of relationship to the audience. Nonetheless, because the goal of this lecture is the acquisition of attention (like 1:8-19 and 2:1-22), and because it does not explicate the actual teaching of the rhetor (again like 1:8-19 and 2:1-22), this lecture may be classified as the third member of the subset "calls to apprenticeship."

Proverbs 4:10-19

1. Text and Translation

- 4:10 Listen, my son, and receive my words,
so that you may live many years.
- 4:11 I teach you¹²⁸ in the way of wisdom;
I direct you in the tracks of uprightness.
- 4:12 When you walk, your steps will not be impeded;
and if you run, you will not stumble.
- 4:13 Seize discipline, do not let go;
guard it,¹²⁹ because it is your life.
- 4:14 Do not enter the way of the wicked,
and do not step into the path of evildoers.
- 4:15 Avoid it; do not enter it;
turn aside from it and pass by.
- 4:16 For they do not sleep if they have not done evil,
and they are deprived of sleep if they have not caused someone to stumble.
- 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness,
and they drink the wine of violence.
- 4:18¹³⁰ But the path of the righteous is like the rising sun,

¹²⁸ The previous imperatives (listen and receive, v. 10) suggest that the perfect tenses of this verse (הִלַּלְתִּיךָ and הִדְרִכְתִּיךָ) refer to present continuous action, i.e., listen and receive what I now teach. See GKC 106g, i; Toy, *Proverbs*, 91; and Whybray, *Proverbs*, 79.

¹²⁹ The 3rd feminine pronominal suffix (נִצְרָהָ) is problematic. The pronoun would appear to refer to "discipline" in the previous line, except that "discipline" (מוֹסֵר) is a masculine noun. The closest feminine singular noun is wisdom (חָכְמָה) in verse 11a. McKane (*Proverbs*, 307) resolves this dilemma by suggesting that the writer personified "discipline" as a woman in verse 13. Whybray (*Proverbs*, 79-80) suggests that the text may be emended to a masculine pronoun (following one ms) or that the grammar is simply an anomaly. Resolution of this problem is tentative. The feminine pronoun may refer to wisdom (so Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 59), be the result of textual corruption, or be a grammatical anomaly. Thus, I have translated נִצְרָהָ as "guard it" and left the referent of the pronoun ambiguous.

¹³⁰ Many scholars transpose verses 18 and 19 (e.g., Toy, *Proverbs*, 91; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 32; and Whybray *Proverbs*, 80) because 1) verse 19 follows logically after verse 17, and 2) the ל ("but") introducing verse 18 is difficult to understand in its present position. This proposal is entirely hypothetical. Further, rhetorical analysis provides an adequate explanation for the present order of the text (see below).

- growing brighter and brighter until [it achieves] full daylight.¹³¹
 4:19 The path of the wicked is like deep darkness;¹³²
 they do not know what causes them to stumble.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

The contrast of the way of wisdom and the way of wickedness is the primary indicator of the limits of this rhetorical unit. This contrast is introduced by the preamble "Listen, my son" (שְׁמַע בְּנִי, 4:10) and concluded by summary statements that offer a final contrast of the two ways (4:18-19). The beginning of a new lecture in 4:20 (see chp. 4), further confirms the limits of this lecture as 4:10-19.¹³³

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

This is now the fourth lecture in which the rhetor diligently appeals for the acceptance of his teaching, but does not directly explicate his teaching. In this respect, this text is quite similar to 1:8-19, 2:1-22, and 4:1-9. However, the rhetorical strategy by which the rhetor of this lecture seeks to achieve his goal differs from these previous lectures. Here, in vivid contrast to the lack of ethos that plagues 4:1-9, the

¹³¹ Literally, this verse reads, "But the path of the righteous is like a gleaming light, going and shining until day is established." Scholars generally agree on the meaning of the idiom as translated here. See GKC 113u; Toy, *Proverbs*, 94-95; and G.R. Driver, "Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament, VII," *JTS* 35 (1934): 381.

¹³² אֶפְלָה dense darkness (cf. Exod 10:22, Isa 8:22, and Prov 7:9).

¹³³ Only F. Delitzsch (*Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. 6: *The Book of Proverbs*, trans. M.G. Easton [reprint; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982], 109) reads 4:10-19 as the continuation of the grandfather's speech in 4:4-9. The primary evidence against this position is the presence of שְׁמַע ("hear"), which does not function as a resumptive clause in any of the lectures. See above, pp. 90-91.

speaker presumes a powerful pre-existent ethos and bases his appeal almost entirely on this source of proof.

a. Logos

The arrangement of this lecture is difficult to follow because of the lack of explicit transitional statements.¹³⁴ Nonetheless, it is possible to outline the lecture according the standard divisions of deliberative rhetoric:

Proem: 4:10a

Proposition: 4:10

Proof: 4:11-17

Conclusion: 4:18-19

The proem consists of the single vocative **בְּנִי**, once again intertwined with the proposition, "Listen, my son, and receive my words" (4:10a). To this, the rhetor adds an immediate reason to accept his proposition: "so that you may live many years" (4:10b). This appeal is essentially the same as that of each of the previous "calls to apprenticeship" (1:8-9, 2:1-11, 4:1-2), namely, that the son pay attention and receive his teaching.

The proof offered in support of this proposition consists of a contrast between the teaching of the rhetor ("in the way of wisdom," 4:11-13) and the "way of the wicked" (4:14-17). The rhetor initiates this contrast by claiming that he teaches the

¹³⁴ Compare, for example, to the clear transitional statements in 2:1-22 signalled by the use of **אָז**, **וְאָז**, **כִּי**, infinitives, and **לְמַעַן**: "if (**אָז**) you receive my words (2:1) . . . then (**וְאָז**) you will understand the fear of Yahweh (2:5) . . . for (**כִּי**) Yahweh gives wisdom (2:6) . . . then (**וְאָז**) your will understand righteousness (2:9) . . . for (**וְאָז**) wisdom will enter your heart (2:10) . . . to rescue you (**לְהַצִּילְךָ**) from the path of evil (2:12) . . . to rescue you (**לְהַצִּילְךָ**) from the alien woman (2:16) . . . therefore (**לְמַעַן**), you should walk in the path of goodness (2:20)."

student in the "way of wisdom" and directs him in the "tracks of uprightness" (4:11). Here, the metaphor of a "way" or "path" denotes everyday living.¹³⁵ He then asserts the benefit of accepting his teaching and walking in these "ways," namely, the son will walk without encountering any obstacle and run without stumbling (4:12). Finally, the rhetor concludes this half of the contrast by reiterating the proposition ("seize discipline, do not let go; guard it," 4:13ab) and reasserting the initial benefit of his teaching, namely the acquisition of life ("because it is your life," 4:13b, cf. 4:10b, "that you may live many years"). This restatement of the proposition is unusually vigorous (i.e., three imperatives + "it is your life," 4:13) and suggests a vital concern on the part of the rhetor for the complete and diligent reception of his teaching.

The second half of the proof contrasts the way of the wicked with the rhetor's way of wisdom. The rhetor begins the contrast with a series of negative imperatives that warn the son against entering the way of the wicked ("Do not enter . . . do not step into . . . Avoid it, do not enter it; turn aside from it and pass by," 4:14-15). Once again, the heaping up of imperatives communicates a sense of urgency and may indicate complacency on the part of the audience. To these admonitions, the rhetor adds two hyperbolic portraits of the wicked.¹³⁶ Sleep imagery is the focal point of the first picture. The wicked are so committed (or addicted) to their chosen profession of

¹³⁵ See Daniel P. Bricker, "The Doctrine of the 'Two Ways'," *JETS* 38 (1995): 501-517. He comments, "In a society that traveled primarily on foot the metaphor of the path or way functioned as an illustration of everyday living" (513).

¹³⁶ The exaggerated nature of these descriptions (e.g., they are unable to sleep if they have not done evil) makes unlikely Toy's suggestion (*Proverbs*, 92-93) that this "must be taken as a local picture of life."

evil doing that they cannot sleep if they have not done evil or caused hardship (4:16). The second word picture draws on table imagery. Those walking in the way of the wicked eat "the bread of wickedness" and drink "the wine of violence" (4:17). These images may be understood in two different, yet complementary, ways: 1) the evildoers eat bread and drink wine that has been obtained by wicked or violent means,¹³⁷ or 2) they eat and drink (i.e., thrive on) wickedness and violence.¹³⁸ Regardless of the specific nuance, these word pictures support the preceding imperatives. First, the son should not enter the way of the wicked because he may become the object of their evil doing. They may cause him to stumble or consume him in their violence. Second, the son should not step into the way of the wicked because such a lifestyle choice is foolish. Once he steps into this way and tastes wicked bread and violent wine, he will immediately become addicted to evil. Just like the evildoers, he will become reliant on wickedness for his sustenance, a dependency that will lead to his demise (4:19).

Verses 11-17, therefore, support the proposition of verse 10 by presenting a contrast between what the rhetor offers in his teaching and what the rejection of his words implies.¹³⁹ The rhetor offers instruction in the way of wisdom and the tracks of uprightness (4:11). Rejecting this instruction will cause the son to enter the way of

¹³⁷ Delitzsch, *The Book of Proverbs*, 111; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 32.

¹³⁸ McKane, *Proverbs*, 308; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 80.

¹³⁹ Consequently, the rhetor presents his proposition as the choice between two options. This polarity is not necessarily the result of simplistic thinking about human nature, i.e., that humans are either good or bad with no intervening categories (as Toy claims, *Proverbs*, 93). Rather, this is a rhetorical device that seeks to clarify the choice presented to the pupil and press the pupil for a decision.

the wicked and the path of evildoers (4:14). The rhetor asserts that his way of wisdom provides a path without impediment and an ability to run without stumbling (4:12). On the other hand, those walking in the path of the wicked cannot sleep until they cause someone to stumble (4:16). The way of wisdom is the way to life (4:10), but the pale of death hangs over the way of the wicked (stumbling, 4:16; violence, 4:17). And finally, those who accept the rhetor's teaching will thrive on discipline (4:13), whereas the evildoers thrive on wickedness and violence (4:17).

This contrast concludes in 4:18-19 with summary statements about the two ways. The order of these statements follows the order of the preceding contrast (the way of wisdom, 4:11-13; the way of the wicked, 4:14-17).¹⁴⁰ Both sentences draw upon the imagery of light and dark. First, the rhetor compares the path of the righteous to a sunrise (4:18). The point of the comparison could be the brilliance of the righteous and their way of life, or more likely, in view of the contrast in 4:19, the full and growing illumination offered to those who walk in the path of righteousness. They do not stumble (4:12) because they can clearly see the path in which they walk. Second, the rhetor compares the path of the wicked to dense darkness (4:19). This is a dangerous path because not only do people stumble, but they cannot see or understand (יָדָע) what causes them to stumble (4:19).

The rhetor's argument is both clear and cohesive. The son must decide whether or not to accept the rhetor's call to apprenticeship. In order to persuade the son to accept his teaching, the rhetor claims that he teaches the way of wisdom in which the

¹⁴⁰ Thus, there is no need for rearranging these verses (see n. 130).

son will not stumble but find life. He then implies that the rejection of his words is tantamount to a decision to enter the way of the wicked. In contrast to his way of wisdom, the way of the wicked is place of stumbling and violence. Finally, the rhetor summarizes the son's options by means of light/dark imagery. The son may walk in the rhetor's way of wisdom that is illuminated, or walk in the deep darkness of the path of the wicked.

b. Ethos

The rhetor's argument seems quite rational: The son should accept his teaching because it is the better of the two ways. However, on closer examination, it becomes apparent that the force of this proof depends solely on the ethos of the rhetor. The rhetor provides no logical proof for his claims about the two ways, i.e., examples or enthymemes. Rather, he takes the position of an acknowledged authority and offers his testimony, and only his testimony. The success of the rhetoric, therefore, hinges on the audience's trust in the speaker.

This rhetorical strategy is even more interesting in light of the rhetor's almost total lack of concern to develop his ethos in the lecture. Unlike previous lectures, he does not cite tradition, identify his words as wisdom, or even refer to God.¹⁴¹ Rather, in the formal language of poetry, he simply addresses the audience as "my son" and speaks his own words about the two ways. Thus, 4:10-19 is a lecture that depends

¹⁴¹ McKane (*Proverbs*, 310) claims that the terminology of verses 18-19 is characteristic of Yahwistic piety. He suggests that "these verses may, therefore, owe their existence to the concern to make the message of the section loud and clear in Yahwistic terms." If true, this would be an important device for developing the ethos of the speaker. However, McKane's argument lacks sufficient textual proof to warrant its inclusion in my discussion.

entirely on the rhetor's ethos and, at the same time, a lecture that fails to develop this ethos in any substantive way. Assuming a minimal rhetorical competency on the part of the rhetor, this evidence leads to the conclusion that the lecture presumes the pre-existence of a rhetor/audience relationship in which the rhetor occupies a high position of trust. Otherwise, this lecture would completely fail to persuade.¹⁴²

c. Pathos

The pathetic devices of this lecture also rely on the ethos of the speaker. Here, the rhetor utilizes the emotions associated with the two ways to persuade the son to accept his call to apprenticeship. On the one hand, the rhetor promises that if the son walks in the way of wisdom, not only will he be able to walk without impediment, he will be able to run without stumbling, i.e., with confidence (4:12). The hope for such confidence (i.e., pleasure) resurfaces in the summary statement about the path of the righteous. Daylight illuminates their path. The longer they walk, the brighter the light becomes (4:18). Thus, they walk, and the son may join them, in complete confidence without fear of stumbling over unseen obstacles.

On the other hand, the way of the wicked embodies the fears associated with a lack of confidence or security. To begin, people in this path are confronted with the terrors propagated by others walking in this way (4:16-17). Further, and worse, the way of the wicked is cloaked in deep darkness. Consequently, they walk in the dark without the ability to see the dangers and obstacles in their path. They never know

¹⁴² See also my discussion of the ethos of 4:20-27.

when they will stumble, or what causes their stumbling (4:19). Their entire existence is characterized by a horrific insecurity and a complete lack of confidence.

Along with the contrasting images of walking, the rhetor also draws upon the idea of "life" to add emotional appeal to his argument. In the proposition, he promises the son that receiving his words will result in long life ("so that you may live many years," 4:10b). Later, this image recurs: "Seize discipline . . . because it is your life" (4:13). It is difficult to construe these promises as anything other than a concern for both physical longevity and complete well-being. The rhetor does not directly mention the opposite of this passion for life, namely, the fear of death. However, he does hint at this fear in the imagery of stumbling in deep darkness (4:19).

4. Summary & Conclusions

The rhetoric of 4:10-19 presumes a rhetorical situation in which the rhetor occupies a position of high esteem in the eyes of his audience. Nonetheless, the rhetorical problem involves the audience's receptivity of the rhetor's teaching. It appears that, although the audience regards highly the speaker, they are not seizing his discipline to his satisfaction. Thus, he not only appeals to them to listen to his speech, but to seize it, not let go of it, and guard it (4:13).

To accomplish his rhetorical goal, the rhetor employs a strategy based primarily on his pre-existent ethos with the audience. He presents a contrast between the way of life offered by his teaching and the way of life chosen by the act of rejecting his teaching. Further, this contrast plays upon the audience's desire for a confident and secure life. The fundamental argument or strategy of the rhetoric, then, is simple: if

the audience really wants a lifestyle devoid of uncertainty (which the rhetor assumes they do), they must diligently seize the teaching of the rhetor because it alone provides instruction and guidance into the path of assured life.

Conclusions: The Rhetoric of the Calls to Apprenticeship

I began this chapter with the hypothesis that, despite their similarities, it is possible to classify the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9 into three groups on the basis of their opening appeals and the correspondence of these appeals to the lectures. My rhetorical analysis of group I, the calls to apprenticeship (1:8-19, 2:1-22, 4:1-9, 4:10-19), has confirmed the validity of this hypothesis insofar as it applies to this group.

The propositions of these lectures employ, almost exclusively, terms from the first category of verbs which stress listening, paying attention, receiving, and pursuing the teaching of the rhetor.¹⁴³ Significantly, in each case, these initial appeals introduce deliberative speeches that only seek to persuade the audience to listen or accept the rhetor's teaching, i.e., accept the call to apprenticeship. The teaching of the rhetor is not explicated. Thus, against almost all interpreters, the initial appeals are not mere formalities. Rather, there is a close relationship between the nuance of the proposition and the proof of these lectures.

Each of these calls to apprenticeship reflects a similar, albeit different, rhetorical problem within an educational setting. In 1:8-19, the rhetor's call is being

¹⁴³ The only exception is the use of עזב ("abandon") in 4:2. This first category of verbs includes שמע, נטש, קשב, לקח, צפן, נטה, קרא, נתן, בקש, and חפש (see Table 1, p. 86).

challenged by an alternative rhetoric, namely, the rhetoric of the sinners. The call to apprenticeship in 2:1-22 confronts what appears to be impatience on the part of the pupil for immediate results. In 4:1-9, a lack of ethos is the primary problem confronted by the rhetor. If the son will accept the speaker's appeal, he must first accept the speaker as a trustworthy sage. Finally, in 4:10-17, while the audience seems to hold the rhetor in high regard, they also seem to be complacent toward his teaching. Thus, a common rhetorical problem calls these lectures into existence: Something is challenging the son's acceptance of or adherence to the sage's call to apprenticeship. This "something" is different in each lecture, and thus the specific strategy of each lecture necessarily differs. However, this common problem fundamentally differs from the problems addressed by the other two subsets of lectures (see chps. 4 and 5).

I will discuss the possible implications of my identification of this subset in the final chapter of this dissertation. First, however, it is necessary to identify the members and rhetorical characteristics of the other two subsets. This process will provide an even clearer contrast between the "calls to apprenticeship" and the other lectures in Proverbs 1-9.

Chapter Four

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF GROUP II: THE CALLS TO REMEMBER AND OBEY

The speeches of 3:1-12, 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 constitute a second subset within the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9. Unlike the preceding speeches of group I, these lectures exhibit no interest in persuading the son to accept the father's call to apprenticeship. Instead, these speeches are preoccupied with reminding the son of the content of the father's teaching and persuading him to obey it. Further, each lecture from this second group follows a common rhetorical strategy, namely, a proposition not to forget the rhetor's teaching (utilizing the second group of verbs, see pp. 84-87), imperatives that remind the son of this teaching, and an elaborated promise of life that motivates the son to remember and obey. This common rhetoric distinguishes 3:1-12, 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 from the calls to apprenticeship.

Once again, this categorization of a subset within the ten lectures runs counter to the present scholarly consensus. Most interpretations of Proverbs 1-9 consider the ten lectures to be virtually indistinguishable. In other words, the form critical conclusion that these lectures belong to the instruction genre has caused scholars to harmonize the diverse features of the lectures rather than recognizing diverse subsets

within the lectures.¹ Consequently, in this chapter, I will offer rhetorical analyses of 3:1-12, 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 in order to demonstrate that these texts constitute a second subset of speeches within the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9, namely, calls to remember and obey.

Proverbs 3:1-12

1. Text and Translation

- 3:1 My son, do not forget my teaching,
and may your heart observe my commandments;
3:2 because length of days, years of life,
and peace they will add to you.
3:3 Do not let loyalty and faithfulness abandon you,
bind them upon your neck;
write them upon the tablet of your heart;
3:4 then you will find favor and good repute
in the eyes of God and people.
3:5 Trust Yahweh with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
3:6 Acknowledge him in all your paths,
and he will make your ways smooth.
3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes,
fear Yahweh, and turn from evil.
3:8 It will be healing for your body
and drink for your bones.
3:9 Honor Yahweh with your wealth
and with the first of all your income;
3:10 so your storehouses will be filled with grain,²
and your wine vats will burst with new wine.
3:11 Do not despise, my son, the discipline of Yahweh
and do not feel disgust with his reprimand,

¹ E.g., Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 33-52.

² The Hebrew שָׁבַע typically means "plenty." However, the translation "corn" or "grain" is supported by the parallel "new wine" (תִּירוֹשׁ) in 3:10b and the Phoenician Karatepe Inscription (III: 7, 9) that attests to the meaning of שָׁבַע as "grain" (Mitchell Dahood, *Proverbs and Northwest Semitic Philology* [Roma: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1963], 9; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 64). This was also the understanding of the LXX translators (ϫϫϫϫϫϫϫϫϫϫ sitou).

3:12 for the one whom Yahweh loves he reproves
just³ like a father [reproves] the son with whom he is pleased.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

The summary conclusion of 2:20-22 (demarcating the end of the previous lecture) and the vocative בְּנִי in 3:1 (introducing a new proposal and new themes), has led to a scholarly consensus regarding the beginning of a new rhetorical unit in 3:1. Scholars, however, do not agree on the terminus of this lecture, e.g., proposals include verse 10,⁴ 12,⁵ 18,⁶ and 20.⁷

Three pieces of evidence favor reading verses 11-12 as the conclusion of the lecture. 1) The vocative בְּנִי, when used in conjunction with specific imperatives as in verse 11 ("do not despise, my son, the discipline of Yahweh"), does not denote the beginning of a new rhetorical unit.⁸ 2) Verses 11-12 do not provide a satisfactory introduction to the hymnic praise of wisdom in verses 13-20. Rather, the interlude of

³ An explanatory ל; see GKC 154a[I].

⁴ Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 21; Kidner, *Proverbs*, 64-65.

⁵ Scott, *Proverbs*, 46-47; McKane, *Proverbs*, 289; Roland E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, FOTL, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), 56-57; Arndt Meinhold, "Gott und Mensch in Proverbien 3," *VT* 37 (1987): 468-72. Toy (*Proverbs*, 64) and Whybray (*Proverbs*, 58) also consider verses 11-12 to be the conclusion of 3:1-10, but they claim that these verses are a later addition.

⁶ Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 85-.94.

⁷ Farmer, *Who Knows*, 35-37.

⁸ See above, pp. 90-91.

3:13-20 has little thematic connection to verses 11-12.⁹ 3) My rhetorical analysis will demonstrate that verses 11-12 provide a suitable conclusion to the lecture as a proviso regarding the promises of verses 1-10.

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

The primary rhetorical problem confronted by this lecture is not the attentiveness or receptivity of the audience, as in group I, but the audience's retention and obedience of the rhetor's teaching (3:1-2). Consequently, this rhetor reminds the son of the salient points of his teaching and endeavors to motivate him to act (3:3-10).

a. Logos

This lecture falls within the category of deliberative rhetoric insofar as it attempts to persuade the son to adopt a course of action. In addition, this lecture also follows the typical structure of Western deliberative rhetoric.

Proem - 3:1a

Proposition - 3:1-2

Proof - 3:3-10

Epilogue - 3:11-12

The proem, like the proems of group I, consists of the single vocative **בְּנִי**, "my son" (3:1 a). This address introduces the proposition, which is stated both negatively ("do not forget my teaching," 3:1a) and positively ("may your heart observe my commandments," 3:1b). A motive clause provides two immediate reasons the son

⁹ Even Oesterley (*Proverbs*, 21), who reads vv. 11-12 as the introduction to vv. 13-20, admits that "the first two verses of this section are, in all probability, out of place, since they deal with an entirely different subject from that of the rest of the section."

should accept this proposition: 1) remembering and obeying will add time to the son's life ("length of days, years of life," 3:2a), and 2) remembering and obeying will add peace to the son's life ("and peace they will add to you," 3:2b). In sum, the rhetor promises that adherence to his teaching will enhance the son's quality of life.

Interpreters largely have overlooked the close correspondence between the proposition (3:1), including its initial argument (3:2), and the proof in this lecture (3:3-10). The rhetor's concern, as expressed in the proposition, is the son's retention of his teaching and obedience. Consequently, the proof consists of imperatives that explicate or remind the son of the rhetor's teaching. Scholars (e.g., McKane, Kidner, Whybray) generally recognize this connection. However, they have overlooked the elaboration of the rhetor's initial promise of life in the proof.¹⁰ Here, each imperative is accompanied by a motive clause that specifies how adherence to the rhetor's teaching will bless the son's life (see below). Because of this oversight, scholars have not fully appreciated the rhetorical development of the proposition (3:1-2) in the proof (3:3-10).

The proof consists of four sets of directives that alternate between positive and negative imperatives, following an ABAB pattern.¹¹ The first set of commands begins with a negative imperative ("Do not let loyalty and faithfulness abandon you," 3:3a), that is clarified by two contrasting positive imperatives ("bind them upon your neck; write them upon the tablet of your heart," 3:3bc). Rather than letting loyalty (לֹא תִשְׁכַּח)

¹⁰ E.g., Kidner, *Proverbs*, 63-64; McKane, *Proverbs*, 290-294; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 58-64. Kidner, McKane, Whybray, et al., identify the promises for the son's life in vv. 3-10, but they do not recognize these specific blessings as elaborations of the initial promise in v. 2.

¹¹ Negative ("do not"), v. 3; Positive ("do"), v. 5; Negative ("do not"), v. 7; Positive ("do"), v. 9.

and faithfulness (תִּנְיָא) slip away, the son must incorporate these attributes into his innermost self.¹² As a result, the rhetor promises that the son will obtain a specific quality of life, namely social and divine favor ("you will find favor and good repute in the eyes of God and people," 3:4).

The second set of directives begins with a positive imperative ("Trust Yahweh with all your heart," 3:5a), that is clarified by a contrasting negative imperative ("do not rely on your own insight," 3:5b) and a second positive imperative ("Acknowledge him in all your paths," 3:6a). Self-reliance is eschewed by the rhetor. Instead, the son must remember to entrust every aspect of his life ("all your paths," 3:6a) to the leadership of Yahweh. The fruit of obedience, the rhetor promises, is that the son's life will be blessed by Yahweh removing hardship from his life ("he will make your ways smooth," 3:6b).

The third set of directions follows the same pattern as the first. Here, the rhetor starts with a negative imperative ("Do not be wise in your own eyes," 3:7a), which is clarified by two contrasting positive imperatives ("fear Yahweh, and turn away from evil," 3:7b). The subject matter of these commands is similar to the previous directives of 3:5-6. Instead of self-confidence and self-determination, the son must revere Yahweh by turning away from evil. Once again, the rhetor claims that

¹² Delitzsch (*Proverbs*, 86) points out that binding loyalty and faithfulness upon the neck is not for the purpose of ornamentation or for protection as an amulet. Rather, this action ensures that the son will not forget about loyalty and faithfulness (See also Toy [*Proverbs*, 58], cf. Deut 6:8-9, 11:18-21). On "heart" (לֵב) as "innermost self," see below on 4:23.

remembering and obeying this instruction will result in an enhanced quality of life, namely, good health ("It will be healing for your body and drink for your bones," 3:8).

The fourth directive consists of a single positive imperative ("Honor Yahweh with your wealth and with the first of all your income," 3:9). This command presents an unusual interest (for Wisdom literature) in worship rituals, specifically in the practice of giving. The son must practice generosity toward Yahweh. Once more, the rhetor pledges that remembering this command and acting upon it will add to the son's quality of life by making him financially successful ("so your storehouses will be filled with grain, and your wine vats will burst with new wine," 3:10).

Thus, each of these four directives develop the rhetor's proposition by reminding the son of the rhetor's teaching (v. 1a) and persuading him to obey these commands because of their benefit to his quality of life (v. 2). The son must incorporate loyalty and faithfulness into his life (vv. 3-4), entrust every aspect of his life to Yahweh (vv. 5-6), revere Yahweh (vv. 7-8), and practice generosity toward Yahweh (vv. 9-10). In response, the rhetor promises that the son will gain social favor (v. 4), a lack of hardship (v. 6b), good health (v. 8), and financial prosperity (v. 10).

The epilogue of the lecture (3:11-12) addresses an important caveat in these claims. In contrast to the preceding blessings, the rhetor concludes with a statement about Yahweh's discipline (מִסֵּר יְהוָה). Divine discipline (מִסֵּר) in the Old Testament consistently denotes physical affliction or deprivation. For example, Eliphaz tells Job:

How happy is the one whom God reproves (יָכַח);
therefore do not despise (מָאַס) the discipline (מִסֵּר) of the Almighty.

For he wounds, but he binds up;

he strikes, but his hands heal. (Job 5:17-18, NRSV)¹³

Similarly, in Proverbs, **מוֹסֵר** is often associated with the idea of rebuke or reproof, and thus with corporal punishment. For example,

Those who spare the rod hate their children,
but those who love them are diligent to discipline (**מוֹסֵר**) them. (13:24, NRSV)

Folly is bound up in the heart of a boy,
but the rod of discipline (**מוֹסֵר**) drives it far away. (22:15, NRSV)

Do not withhold discipline (**מוֹסֵר**) from your children;
if you beat them with a rod, they will not die. (23:13, NRSV)¹⁴

Thus, in 3:11-12, it appears that the rhetor envisions some misfortune or lack of prosperity. What if the son remembers and obeys the rhetor's teaching but does not experience the promised trouble-free life of social favor, good health, and financial prosperity?¹⁵ In this case, the rhetor seems to assume that the son will regard his misfortune as the discipline (**מוֹסֵר**) of Yahweh. Thus, he advises the son that he must not loathe or feel contempt for Yahweh's actions ("Do not despise, my son, the discipline of Yahweh and do not feel disgust with his reprimand," 3:11). In order to motivate such a compliant attitude, the rhetor does not promise any physical benefit for the son (as in 3:3-10), but attempts to reshape the son's understanding of hardship. Such hardship is not punishment for wrongdoing. Rather, Yahweh's reproof denotes

¹³ See also Isaiah 26:16, Jeremiah 2:30, 5:3, 30:14, Ezekiel 5:15, and Zephaniah 3:7.

¹⁴ Admittedly, other occurrences of **מוֹסֵר** do not necessarily denote corporal punishment (e.g., 1:2, 3, 7, 8). Nonetheless, the son's anticipated reaction in 3:11-12 (he may despise or feel disgust with Yahweh's **מוֹסֵר**) suggests that here, Yahweh's **מוֹסֵר** is not merely teaching, but some type of affliction.

¹⁵ So e.g., Toy, *Proverbs*, 64; Scott, *Proverbs*, 47.

his love for the son and his pleasure in him ("for the one whom Yahweh loves he reproves, just like a father [reproves] the son with whom he is pleased," 3:12).¹⁶ Thus, when obedient, a lack of social favor, good health, smooth paths, and financial prosperity demonstrates Yahweh's love for the son, not his displeasure.

b. Ethos

Evidence of how the rhetor develops his ethos in this lecture is unclear. He addresses his audience as "my son" and employs the formal language of poetry, thus developing his ethos.¹⁷ However, the crucial question for understanding the ethos of this lecture pertains to ambiguous traditio-historical matters. Some scholars have suggested that the rhetor took his ideas and statements directly from earlier texts.¹⁸

Compare, for example, the following texts:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Prov 3:3 | Do not let loyalty and faithfulness abandon you,
bind (קשר) them upon your neck;
write (כתב) them upon the tablet of your heart (לב) |
| Deut 6:6, 8, 9 | Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart (לב) . . . Bind (קשר) them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write (כתב) them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (NRSV) |
| Prov 3:9 | Honor Yahweh with your wealth
and with the first of all your income; |
| Deut 18:4 | The first fruits of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. (NRSV, see also 26:2) |

¹⁶ So Whybray, *Proverbs*, 64.

¹⁷ On the use of these devices for developing the rhetor's ethos, see above, pp. 104-105.

¹⁸ E.g., Robert, "Les Attaches Littéraires Bibliques de Prov. I - IX," 66-68.

- Prov 3:10 so your storehouses (אֹסֶס) will be filled with grain,
and your wine vats will burst with new wine.
- Deut 28:1, 8 If you will only obey the Lord your God, by diligently observing
all his commandments that I am commanding you today . . . The
Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns (אֹסֶס),
and in all that you undertake; he will bless you in the land that
the Lord, your God is giving you. (NRSV, see also Mal 3:10-12)
- Prov 3:11-12 Do not despise, my son, the discipline (מִוֶּסֶר) of Yahweh
and do not feel disgust with his reprimand (תּוֹכַחַהּ),
for the one whom Yahweh loves he reproves (יִכַּח)
just like a father [reproves] the son with whom he is pleased.
- Job 5:17, 18 How happy is the one whom God reproves (יִכַּח);
therefore do not despise the discipline (מִוֶּסֶר) of the Almighty.
For he wounds, but he binds up;
he strikes, but his hands heal. (NRSV)

The similarity of thought and language in these texts seems undeniable. However, establishing the specific relationship of Proverbs 3:1-12 to these texts is extremely difficult, as demonstrated by the ongoing debate in scholarly literature. Scholars disagree on the point at which similarity denotes textual influence and, if present, the direction of such influence (e.g., from Job to Prov or Prov to Job).¹⁹

Rhetorical interests, which up to this time have not been a part of this tradition-historical discussion, further complicate this debate. If the rhetor drew on his

¹⁹ E.g., Robert (ibid., 66-68) was the first to identify many of these similarities and advance the claim that Proverbs 3:1-12 relied on earlier texts. Against this, McKane (*Proverbs*, 291-92) writes, "For the most part, the resemblances in vocabulary between other biblical books and Proverbs 1-9 which Robert adduces are too general to serve any useful purpose . . ." (291). In a similar fashion, Whybray (*Proverbs*, 59-60) regards most of the similarities in vocabulary in 3:1-12 as fortuitous or as due to a common educational vocabulary. He does, however, consider the concentration of parallels to Deuteronomy in this passage to be "too striking to be totally ignored" (60). Yet, against Robert, Whybray suggests that if there was influence, it operated in the opposite direction (from Prov to Deut).

audience's religious traditions, what was his underlying rhetorical strategy? The ambiguity of traditio-historical study makes any response to this question tentative. Nonetheless, it does appear that the rhetor builds his ethos in this lecture by presenting himself as an advocate for the religious traditions of his community. Although his teaching certainly expresses his own desires for the son, the rhetor does not present his instruction as what he wants, but what Yahweh wants. His instruction revolves around the son's proper attitude and actions toward Yahweh ("trust," 3:5; "fear," 3:7; "honor," 3:9; "do not despise," 3:11). It appears that this concern for Yahweh helps the rhetor establish himself as a reliable speaker. He is not offering self-authorized instruction, but reminding the son of the religious values of the community. However, the specific degree to which traditio-historical connections build this ethos remains, for the present, unresolved.

c. Pathos

The rhetor's initial promise of "length of days, years of life, and peace" (3:2) sets the tone for the lecture. Instead of threats or warnings about negative consequences for forgetting the father's teaching (cf. 2:16-19, 4:19), the pathos of this lecture is entirely positive: remembering and obeying will fulfill the son's desire for genuine life.

The motive clauses in the proof enhance this passionate appeal. Here, as I have already mentioned, the rhetor enumerates four dimensions of a successful life: 1) social reputation (v. 4), 2) lack of problems (v. 6), 3) good health (v. 8), and 4) wealth (v. 10). Presumably, these specific boons reflect the son's definition of

successful living or the rhetor's definition that he is constructing for the son. Thus, in addition to the rhetor's general appeal to a full life (3:2), he appears to play upon the specific desires and hopes of the son. If the son will only remember and obey, he will find fulfillment for each of his dreams: health, wealth, social standing, and a trouble-free life. This combination of promises presents a powerful pathetic argument for the acceptance of the rhetor's proposition.

A second type of pathetic appeal occurs in the epilogue. In the absence of material rewards, the son should still remember and obey, not because of the hope of physical rewards, but because hardship demonstrates Yahweh's special love for and pleasure in the son (3:12). Instead of feeling "disgust" or hatred ("do not despise," 3:11) for the lack of reward, the son should take solace in Yahweh's love and acceptance of him as a son. Thus, he should continue to remember and obey the rhetor's teaching.

The pathetic proof, therefore, develops two positive arguments in support of the proposition. On the one hand, the rhetor makes direct appeals to specific material rewards (3:3-10). The son can fulfill his greatest desires by remembering and obeying the rhetor's teaching. On the other hand, the rhetor (re)interprets the lack of material rewards as a special demonstration of Yahweh's love. If obedience does not bring a trouble-free life of health, wealth, and social standing, the son should consider himself especially loved and accepted by Yahweh. In either situation, the rhetor provides the son with emotional support to remember and obey his teaching.

4. Summary & Conclusions

The rhetorical situation of 3:1-12 is an educational setting in which a father/teacher addresses his son/pupil(s).²⁰ Further, as Whybray points out, these pupils appear to be young men from wealthy land-owning families. The rhetor speaks about "your wealth" (3:9a), "your income" (3:9b), "your storehouses" (3:10a), and "your wine vats" (3:10b).²¹ Within this setting, the rhetor faces two problems. First, his audience may forget and consequently not obey his teaching. This failure (potential or real) may be the result of the pupil's self-reliance ("do not rely on your own insight," 3:5; "do not be wise in your own eyes," 3:8). Nothing in the lecture suggests any other reason for such a memory lapse, e.g., the attractiveness of an alternative rhetoric (cf. 1:10-14).

In order to resolve this first set of problems, the rhetor makes an appeal for his students to remember his teaching and obey his commandments (3:1). He then reminds them of his teaching through a series of imperatives: maintain loyalty and faithfulness, trust Yahweh, revere Yahweh, and practice generosity toward Yahweh. This resolves the problematic memory of the son. The obedience of the son is resolved by two additional strategies. First, the rhetor carefully presents his teaching not as self originating, but as the community's traditional teaching about Yahweh. Second, in addition to his general promise of abundant life, the rhetor holds out the

²⁰ On the educational setting of this lecture, see my discussion of the meaning of בִּנְיָ (pp. 92-96).

²¹ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, 101-02.

promise of four specific dimensions of successful living: social favor, smooth paths, good health, and financial prosperity.

The second rhetorical problem faced by the rhetor is the failure (potential or actual) of his promise of material rewards. What if the son obeys, but does not experience a trouble-free life of social favor, good health, and financial prosperity? The rhetor resolves this crisis by (re)interpreting the lack of material reward as an even greater sign of Yahweh's love for the obedient son. Consequently, in boon or bust, the rhetor creates arguments to support his proposition that the son remember and obey his teaching.

Proverbs 3:21-35

1. Text and Translation

- 3:21²² My son, do not let them be lost from your sight,
guard sound judgment and discretion,
3:22 and they will be life to your soul
and an ornament of favor²³ to your neck.
3:23 Then you will walk your path securely;
you will not strike your foot [on anything].

²² Numerous scholars (e.g., Toy [*Proverbs*, 73-74]; Oesterley [*Proverbs*, 24]) and translators (e.g., RSV, REB, NIV) transpose the two lines of verse 21 (e.g., "My son, keep sound wisdom and discretion; let them not escape from your sight," RSV). The antecedent of the pronoun "them" in verse 21a is problematic and may be the result of an accidental transposition of lines by a scribe. However, this unusual syntax may also be a rhetorical device. By beginning the lecture with an appeal to the son not to lose "them" from his sight, the rhetor creates a heightened interest in the identity of these objects. Thus, I read the MT of verse 21 as a rhetorical ploy to gain the attention of the audience.

²³ The usual meaning of חֵן is "favor" or "grace." However, as Whybray (*Proverbs*, 70) points out, the context (חֵן "to your neck") suggests the idea of "adornment" (cf. 17:8; so also the NRSV, NIV, and REB).

- 3:24 When you sit down²⁴ you will not be in dread;
you will lie down and your sleep will be pleasant.
- 3:25 You will not be afraid²⁵ of sudden dread,
the ruin that will come on the wicked;
- 3:26 because Yahweh will be your confidence;²⁶
he will keep your foot from being captured.
- 3:27 Do not withhold good from the one to whom it is due²⁷
when it is within your power to do it.
- 3:28 Do not say to your friend,²⁸ "Go away and come back later,
I will give it [to you] tomorrow," when it is there with you.
- 3:29 Do not devise evil against your friend,
who dwells securely with you.
- 3:30 Do not take a person to court²⁹ for no reason,

²⁴ The LXX (**kaq**^) supports the emendation of תִּשְׁכַּב ("lie down") to תִּשָּׁב ("sit down"). Whybray also observes (*Proverbs*, 71), that if emended, these verses present a sequence of action: walking (v. 23), sitting (v. 24a), and lying down (v. 24b). Otherwise, verse 24 presents an odd repetition, "when you lie down you will not be in dread; you will lie down and your sleep will be pleasant." The corruption of the MT is most likely due to a scribal error in which a single letter (כ) was inadvertently added to the original תִּשָּׁב, perhaps because of the occurrence of שְׁכַבְתָּ in the second line of the verse. This emendation is adopted by Toy (*Proverbs*, 73, 75), NRSV, REB, and JB.

²⁵ אַל-תִּירָא may be translated as an imperative: "do not be afraid" (e.g., RSV, NRSV, REB, NIV). However, the context stands against this translation. Like the negative clauses of verse 23 ("you will not strike your foot") and verse 24 ("you will not be in dread"), verse 25 makes a promise ("you will not be afraid"), not a demand (so Delitzsch [*Proverbs*, 96-97] and the NJV). The syntax also permits this translation. אַל + the jussive may denote the conviction that something cannot or should not happen (see GKC 109e).

²⁶ The prefixed preposition ב is an instance of the ב *essentiae* that explains the role or capacity in which Yahweh will act (see GKC 119i and Delitzsch [*Proverbs*, 97]).

²⁷ מִבְּעָלָיו, literally "from its owner."

²⁸ Reading the singular לִרְעִי for the Ketib לִרְעִיךָ. The subsequent singular address ("go away [לְךָ] and come back [וְשׁוּב] later" [3:28a]) supports this emendation, as well as the Qere, Syriac, Targums, and Vulgate.

²⁹ The phrase אַל-תִּרְוּב (or אַל-תִּרְיב [Qere]) may mean either "do not quarrel" or "do not take to court" ("do not accuse a man," NIV). Most scholars prefer the translation "do not quarrel" (e.g., RSV, NRSV, NJV, REB, Toy [*Proverbs*, 78], and Delitzsch [*Proverbs*, 101]). Although defensible, this translation overlooks the pattern established in verses 27-28 of an initial imperative (v. 27), clarified by a second imperative (v. 28). Here in verses 29-30, the

- when he has not done evil to you.
- 3:31 Do not be envious of the violent person
and do not chose any of his ways.
- 3:32 For the crooked are an abomination to Yahweh,
but his counsel is with the upright.
- 3:33 The curse of Yahweh is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the habitation of the righteous.
- 3:34 He derides the scorners,³⁰
but he gives favor to the humble.
- 3:35 The wise will receive honor,
but fools obtain³¹ disgrace.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

The vocative **בְּנִי** in 3:21 introduces an abrupt change in subject and style from the preceding verses. In contrast to the hymnic praise of woman wisdom (3:13-20),

rhethor follows the same pattern. After the general imperative in verse 30 (the son must not devise schemes against a neighbor), the rhetor supplies a second imperative that clarifies the first (the son must not take a neighbor to court).

³⁰ The general meaning of this verse is discernable, but the specific nuance of **אִם-לֹא יִצְיִים** remains problematic. It is possible to translate this verse as a conditional sentence ("If he is scornful to the scorners, he gives favor to the humble"); however, a conditional sentence would disrupt the series of contrasting clauses in verses 32-35. Some scholars (e.g., Toy, *Proverbs*, 83) resolve the difficulty by emending **אִם** to **עִם** ("He is scornful with the scorners"). Such emendation is unnecessary. Here, **אִם** is a concessive ("though," see GKC 160a and Driver, "Problems in the Hebrew Text of Proverbs," 176) and **לֹא** has the same grammatical function as in the second half of the verse (so McKane, *Proverbs*, 303). Thus, this verse continues the series of contrasting statements, literally, "while to the scorners he is scornful, to the humble he gives favor" (see also, Delitzsch [*Proverbs*, 103]).

³¹ The meaning of the MT **מָרִים** is a notorious crux. Scholars have advanced numerous interpretations (e.g., Toy [*Proverbs*, 82-83] suggests the emendation **הָרַשׁ** or **רָשָׁה** ["possess," "get possession of"]; Delitzsch [*Proverbs*, 104-05] reads "carry away" [a Hiphil of **רָשָׁה**]; Oesterley [*Proverbs*, 28] follows Steumagel's emendation **מִוִּרְשָׁה** ["inherit"]; Driver ["Problems in the Hebrew Text of Proverbs," 177] emends **מָרִים** to **מַדָּם** ["their garment"], and Thomas ["Textual and Philological Notes," 282-83] proposes the translation "heighten" or "increase" [followed by McKane, *Proverbs*, 302]), none of which have found wide acceptance. The general meaning of the line may be discerned from the context. Whereas the wise receive honor (v 35a), fools will receive or obtain disgrace (v. 35b). The specific nuance of the verb **מָרִים**, however, remains ambiguous.

3:21 initiates pragmatic rhetoric designed to help the son retain sound judgment and discretion (3:21). Consequently, most scholars acknowledge the beginning of a new literary/rhetorical unit in 3:21.³²

No such consensus exists regarding the end of this lecture. Scholars generally acknowledge the beginning of a new rhetorical unit in 4:1³³ and the presence of three textual units within 3:21-35: 1) vv. 21-26 (an appeal + motivation), 2) vv. 27-31 (five negative imperatives), and 3) vv. 32-35 (four motive clauses). However, scholars do not agree on whether these three units compose a single lecture,³⁴ or if the lecture is

³² Several scholars challenge this consensus. Fichtner (editor of Proverbs in BHS) and Overland ("Literary Structure in Proverbs 1-9," 285-307) present 3:13-26 as a unified textual unit. Roland Murphy (*Wisdom Literature*, 57) identifies 3:13-24 as a complete instruction. Delitzsch (Proverbs, 94-98) regards 3:19-26 as a literary unit.

The arguments for reading verse 21 as the continuation of the preceding verses include: 3:19-20 supplies the antecedent for "them" in 3:21a; word repetitions link 3:21f. to the preceding material (e.g., מִן [v. 14 and 25], כִּי [v. 14 and 25], חַיִּים [v. 18 and 22]); and verse 13 introduces the themes developed throughout 3:13-26 (see Overland, "Literary Structure in Proverbs 1-9," 285-307).

The fundamental problem with these delimitations is that they ignore formal and rhetorical features that distinguish 3:13-20 from 3:21-26 (21-35). 3:13-18 is a hymn to woman Wisdom to which an editor has added the Yahwistic epilogue of 3:19-20 (see Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 42-43). In contrast to this hymn, 3:21-35 is an instruction. Further, the בְּנִי of verse 21 is a proem that introduces a new proposition (vv. 21-22) that is developed throughout verses 23-35 (see my analysis of the Logos).

³³ See above, p. 133.

³⁴ So Kidner, *Proverbs*, 65-66; McKane, *Proverbs*, 289; Bernhard Lang, *Die Weisheitliche Lehrrede*, 29; Meinhold, "Gott and Mensch," 468-472; and Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 54.

limited to one (e.g., 3:21-26)³⁵ or two (e.g., 3:21-26 + 27-32,³⁶ or 3:21-26 + 32-35³⁷) of these units.

The widespread disagreement on the limits of this lecture reflects an apparent lack of cohesiveness in 3:21-35. These verses do not appear to be as unified as some of the other lectures (e.g., 1:8-19, 2:1-22, 3:1-12). Nonetheless, two arguments favor reading 3:21-35 as a single speech. First, a logical progression of thought unites all three units. Part I (vv. 21-26) provides the proposition that is developed in part II (vv. 27-31), and brought to a theological climax in part III (vv. 32-35). I will elaborate and defend this claim in my analysis of the Logos.

Second, 3:21-35 offers a variation of the rhetorical strategy already seen in 3:1-12. In 3:1-12, the rhetor's primary concern was that the son not forget his teaching but be obedient. Consequently, he supported his proposition by a general motive clause and a series of imperatives + specific motive clauses. Thus, he reminded the son of his teaching and motivated him to obey it. Here, in 3:21-35, the rhetor's concern and strategy is basically the same. The rhetor urges the son not to lose sight of sound judgment and discretion (v. 21). He supports this proposition with a general motive clause (v. 22) and a series of imperatives that remind the son of what he must not forget (vv. 27-31). He also provides specific motive clauses supporting these

³⁵ Those who limit the lecture to 3:21-26 include some or all of verses 13-20. See above, f.n. 32.

³⁶ Those who limit the text to the two units of 3:21-26 and 27-31 usually include verse 32 as the conclusion of the lecture (e.g., Whybray, *Proverbs*, 69-70).

³⁷ 3:21-26 + 32-35 (Scott, *Proverbs*, 48); 3:21-26 + 31-35 (Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 26); 3:25-26 + 32-35 (Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 58).

imperatives (3:23-26, 32-35). The primary difference between 3:21-35 and 3:1-12 is that in 3:1-12 the rhetor integrated the motive clauses with the imperatives, but in 3:21-35 the rhetor segregates the imperatives from the motives, thus creating two textual sub-units. Nonetheless, the similarity in rhetorical form suggests that 3:21-35, like 3:1-12, should be read as a single lecture.

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

Rhetorical analysis offers two unique contributions to the understanding of 3:21-35. First, by identifying the proposition of the lecture and offering an analysis of how the subsequent rhetoric elaborates this proposition, my rhetorical analysis will provide a strong argument for the unity of 3:21-35. Second, by drawing attention not only to the logos, but also to the ethos and pathos of the lecture (almost completely ignored by scholars), my analysis will reveal insights regarding the rhetorical situation of the lecture and the rhetorical strategy adopted by the father.

a. Logos

This lecture, like each of the previous lectures, exemplifies deliberative rhetoric. First, the rhetor seeks to persuade the audience to adopt a course of action, namely to remember and act in accordance with sound judgment and discretion. Second, in order to accomplish this goal, the lecture follows the typical Western form of deliberative speech:

Proem - 3:21a
Proposition - 3:21-22
Proof - 3:23-31
Epilogue - 3:32-35

The proem consists of the single Hebrew word בְּנִי, "my son" (3:21a). With this vocative, the rhetor establishes a congenial tone of authoritative address. He speaks as a "father" to his "son." Once again, this father/son language most likely denotes an educational setting, not the address of a father to his biological son.³⁸ The father/rhetor asserts a negative proposition ("Do not let them be lost from your sight," 3:21a) that is immediately clarified by a positive imperative ("guard sound judgment and discretion," 3:21b). This proposition is similar to that of 3:1. Both 3:1 and 3:21 address a concern for the son's memory ("do not forget," 3:1; "do not let them be lost from your sight," 3:21) and obedience ("observe my commandments," 3:1; "guard sound judgment and discretion," 3:21). However, the object of the son's memory and obedience is slightly different in the propositions of these lectures. In 3:1, the rhetor implored the son to remember "my teaching" and "my commandments." Here, in 3:21, the first person possessive pronouns are absent, e.g., the son must guard "sound judgment," not "my sound judgment."³⁹ I will consider the significance of this omission below.

As in all of the lectures, the rhetor supplies a initial motive clause in support of his proposition. Here, he promises that guarding sound judgment will bless the son

³⁸ See above, pp. 92-96.

³⁹ This absence of first person pronouns not only differs from 3:1, but from most of the other lectures. Compare to 2:1 ("my words," "my commandments"), 3:1 ("my teaching," "my commandments"), 4:2 ("my teaching"), 4:10 ("my words"), 4:20 ("my words," "my sayings"), 5:1 ("my wisdom," "my understanding"), and 7:1-2 ("my words," "my commandments," "my teaching").

Only two other lectures lack first person possessives, namely, 1:8 ("the instruction of your father," "the teaching of your mother") and 6:20 ("the commandment of your father," "the teaching of your mother").

with genuine or physical life ("they will be life to your soul [נפש], 3:22a) and social life ("and an ornament of favor to your neck," 3:22b). Again, like the previous lecture (3:1-12), the rhetor promises that accepting his proposition will enhance the son's quality of life.

The proof of the lecture (3:23-35) specifies how exercising sound judgment and discretion will enhance the son's quality of life and articulates the specific concepts of sound judgment the son must remember. First, the rhetor lauds the security and confidence that come from practicing sound judgment and discretion (vv. 23-26). He makes two promises. To begin, he claims that the son will go about his life with confidence ("Then [אז] you will walk your path securely," v. 23). Two temporal clauses strengthen this claim by describing the serenity of such a secure life ("When you sit down you will not be in dread; you will lie down and your sleep will be pleasant," v. 24). Second, the rhetor promises that practicing sound judgment will remove the son's fear of disaster, namely the terrible **שָׁחַד** that comes upon the wicked ("You will not be afraid of sudden dread, the ruin [שָׁחַד] that will come on the wicked," v. 25). A theological claim undergirds this promise, namely, that Yahweh will become the son's confidence (v. 26a) and will intervene in his life to prevent his downfall ("he will keep your foot from being captured," v. 26b). The rhetor will return to the idea of Yahweh's active intervention in the son's life in the epilogue.

In the second half of the proof, a series of negative imperatives remind the son of three specific tenets of sound judgment and discretion (3:27-31).⁴⁰ Through these imperatives the rhetor defines sound judgment and discretion primarily as attitudes and actions toward other people.⁴¹ The first two imperatives condemn the withholding of "good" when it is within the power and possession of the son (vv. 27-28). Here, "good" (בִּט, v. 27) most likely refers to the repayment of a loan.⁴² An inability to repay is not the problem. Rather, when the son is able to pay he must not retain ("Do not withhold good," v. 27a) or even temporarily delay his payment ("Go away and come back later, I will give it [to you] tomorrow," v. 28). Discretion (v. 21) requires conscientious repayment of debts.

⁴⁰ Against most commentators, the rhetor presents only three ideas in vv. 27-31, not five. Each idea is developed by two verses: the repayment of debts (vv. 27-28), subterfuge against a neighbor (vv. 29-30), and the apparent glamour of a violent lifestyle (vv. 31-32; on the inclusion of verse 32 with the proof, see below).

⁴¹ Only McKane (*Proverbs*, 297) offers a similar, albeit different, thesis. He suggests that the writer attempted to reinterpret sound judgment and discretion in verses 22-26, "but it is not carried through either perceptively or felicitously." In my opinion, it is not the motive clauses of verses 22-26 that interpret sound judgement and discretion, but the imperatives of verses 27-31. The same rhetorical strategy (definition/reminder via imperative) occurs in 3:1-12 (see above) and 4:20-27 (see below).

⁴² There is no consensus on the meaning of this verse. Compare the LXX ("from the poor"), Toy, *Proverbs*, 77 ("from thy neighbor"), Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 99-100 (the one worthy of it), and Michael V. Fox, "LXX Proverbs 3:28 and Ancient Egyptian Wisdom," *HAR* 8 (1984): 63-69 ("Do not withhold a benefit from one who is eager for it").

In support of my interpretation (repayment of a loan), Whybray points out (*Proverbs*, 72) that מִבְּעָלִי may be related to the Akkadian *bel hubulli*, which means "creditor." In his opinion, the matter is resolved by the word בִּט, which denotes material wealth in 12:14 and 13:2. However, since בִּט may also take a more general meaning (e.g., "good lifestyle," 2:20; "good instruction," 4:2), verse 28 presents a more convincing argument. Here, the rhetor continues the thought of verse 27 by urging the son not to delay payment "when it is there with you."

The second set of imperatives condemns malicious schemes against the innocent (vv. 29-30). The son must not plot against an unsuspecting companion, thus taking advantage of his trust ("Do not devise evil against your friend, who dwells securely with you," v. 29). More specifically, he must not take this companion or any other person to court without due cause ("Do not take a person to court for no reason, when he has not done evil to you," v. 30). Sound judgment rejects all subterfuge against a neighbor for personal gain.

The final set of imperatives issues a general warning against being enamored with the apparently successful ways of the violent ("Do not be envious of the violent person," v. 31a) and thus adopting such a lifestyle ("and do not chose any of his ways," v. 31b). Unlike the preceding imperatives, the rhetor does not identify the specific actions of the violent.⁴³ This lack of specificity and the position of this imperative at the end of the proof leads to the possibility, suggested by Van Leeuwen, that the violent persons in verse 31 are the persons condemned in the preceding verses (vv. 27-30).⁴⁴ Thus, the rhetor concludes his proof by cautioning the son about the apparent success of the "violent" who refuses to repay debts and who pursues unjust lawsuits.

⁴³ The form of verse 31 also differs from the preceding imperatives. Rather than a single negative imperative plus explanatory clauses, verse 31 contains two negative imperatives.

⁴⁴ Van Leeuwen ("The Book of Proverbs," 55) writes, "The summarizing precept (v. 31) and the motive clauses that follow (vv. 32-35) provide depth to the foregoing admonitions. Actions of greed (vv. 28-29) or assault (vv. 29-30) are 'ways' of the violent. The violent are immoral persons whose might is their right, who use whatever force they command, whether moral or not, to expand their own kingdom at the expense of their neighbors." See also, Meinhold, "Gott and Mensch," 471.

A motive clause attends this conclusion: "For (וְ) the crooked are an abomination to Yahweh, but his counsel is with the upright" (v. 32). On the one hand, this clause supplies an argument for the preceding imperative (v. 31). Despite their apparent success, malicious and greedy people do not possess the favor of Yahweh. On the other hand, this statement provides an important transition from the imperatives of the proof (vv. 27-31) to the statements of the epilogue (vv. 32-35). The hinge of this transition is the word וְ ("for" or "because"). The son must not envy or adopt the ways of the violent (v. 31) *because* (וְ) "the crooked are an abomination to Yahweh" (v. 32). Thus, in these verses "the violent" (v. 31) equals "the crooked" (v. 32). Although scholars universally concur with this understanding of the parallelism, they have not grasped the full rhetorical significance of this transitional link.

First, in conjunction with the imperative of verse 31, the transitional statement of verse 32 restates the proposition of the lecture. Earlier, the rhetor said that the son must remember and exercise sound judgment (v. 21). If he does, he will live securely because Yahweh will be his confidence (vv. 23-26). Then, the rhetor defined sound judgment as repaying debts and rejecting all forms of subterfuge against a neighbor (vv. 27-30). Those who reject these tenets of sound judgment, he calls violent and crooked people (vv. 31-32). Now, as the rhetor begins the epilogue, he urges the son not to follow the violent/crooked person in rejecting the teaching of sound judgment ("do not chose any of his ways," v. 31a). Thus, the rhetorical argument has come full circle.

Second, this transitional statement enables the reader to recognize the identity, not only of "the crooked" (v. 32), but also the other persons in the epilogue. The eight different terms in verses 32-35 (i.e., "crooked," "wicked," "scorners," "fools," "upright," "righteous," "humble," and "wise") do not introduce eight new groups of people into the rhetoric, but make a contrast between two groups already mentioned. One group is composed of the crooked (i.e., the wicked, the scorners, and the fools) who reject the teaching of sound judgment. The second group is composed of the upright (i.e., the righteous, the humble, and the wise) who remember and exercise such judgment.⁴⁵ These identities, however, depend primarily on the reader's recognition of the transitional position of verse 32 between the epilogue and the proof. Once the reader recognizes that the crooked in verse 32 are those who reject the rhetor's proposition, the cohesiveness of the lecture is apparent.

Typically, an epilogue in deliberative rhetoric summarizes the preceding argument and seeks to make a final, powerful appeal to motivate the audience to take action.⁴⁶ The declarations of verses 32-35 fulfill this function for the preceding rhetoric. In the proof, the rhetor introduced the idea of Yahweh's active intervention in the life of a son who exercises sound judgment and discretion (v. 26). Now, in the epilogue, the rhetor returns to this claim and elaborates four contrasting ways in which

⁴⁵ Toy (*Proverbs*, 79) and Van Leeuwen ("The Book of Proverbs," 55) make similar claims about the relationship of verses 32-35 to verse 31, namely, that all of the statements in verses 32-35 warn against the apparent prosperity of the wicked (v. 31).

⁴⁶ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 24.

Yahweh intervenes in human affairs. Thus, he provides a concluding theological argument.⁴⁷

First, whereas the person who adopts a violent lifestyle is an abomination to Yahweh ("the crooked are an abomination to Yahweh, v. 32a), the upright person who follows the ways of sound judgment receives Yahweh's counsel ("but his counsel [חַסֵּד] is with the upright," v. 32b).⁴⁸ The son, according to the rhetoric of the father, must make a choice that involves nothing less than his relationship with God.⁴⁹ If he accepts sound judgment, he will enjoy Yahweh's counsel (thus enjoying the secure life promised in vv. 23-26). If he refuses, he will be the object of Yahweh's anger and thus experience the חַשָּׁשׁ that comes on the wicked (v. 25).

Second, the rhetor claims that Yahweh will bring about the downfall of the wicked ("The curse of Yahweh is on the house of the wicked," v. 33a), but he will bless the righteous (v. 33b). This claim summarizes the first half of the proposition, namely, that those who exercise discretion will experience Yahweh's blessing of a secure life (vv. 23-26). Here, however, the rhetor elaborates what was suppressed

⁴⁷ So Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 54.

⁴⁸ חַסֵּד may denote a "council" or the "counsel" which comes from a council (see Amos 3:7; H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Council of Yahweh," *JTS* 45 (1944): 152). The image of a divine council is most often attested in prophetic literature (e.g., I Kgs 22:19-22, Jer 23:18,22, Isa 6:1-12; see Frank M. Cross, Jr., "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," *JNES*, 12 (1953): 274-77; and *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973], 186-90). Nonetheless, the same image occurs in Israel's wisdom literature (e.g., Job 1:6-12, 2:1-7, 15:8, 29:4). Here, in Prov 3:32, the reception of Yahweh's counsel denotes an intimate relationship in which the son will enjoy Yahweh's guidance.

⁴⁹ So Kidner, *Proverbs*, 60.

earlier in the proof, namely, that those who reject discretion will not have such security. Instead, Yahweh's curse will fall upon them. Again, the son faces a decision that directly impacts his relationship to the divine. Will he accept sound judgment and experience the blessing of Yahweh or reject sound judgment and face Yahweh's curse?

Third, Yahweh treats the scornful just as they have treated others ("He derides [יִלְיָן] the scorers [לְצִיִּים]," v. 34a), but he gives favor to the humble (v. 34b). As in the two previous statements, this claim refers back to earlier statements in the lecture. "Favor" (in, v. 34b) is the same gift that was promised to those who guard sound judgment and discretion (v. 22a). Thus, the rhetor continues to push the son for a decision on the initial proposition. Humbly accepting the tenets of sound judgment will result in favor (v. 22 and v. 34). Refusing to obey, i.e., scorning discretion, carries the penalty of Yahweh's scorn. How the son responds to sound judgment will determine how Yahweh responds to the son.

Fourth and finally, the rhetor concludes the lecture with a sweeping statement that makes a final, passionate appeal for the proposition. Honor will be the inheritance of the wise ("The wise will receive [נָחַל] honor," v. 35a), but fools will obtain disgrace (v. 35b). In this context, the wise (v. 35a) are those who remember and obey the tenets of sound judgment (v. 21). As previously promised (v. 22), they will receive honor (v. 35a). The fools (v. 35b) are those who forget sound wisdom and discretion (v. 21). Consequently, they do not receive favor (v. 22) or honor (v. 35a), but disgrace (35b). The son's decision, therefore, not only involves his relationship to Yahweh (v. 32), Yahweh's curse or blessing (v. 33), and Yahweh's response to the son

(v. 34), but the fundamental choice between wisdom and folly. Thus, the rhetor concludes the lecture in such a way that the son's response to his proposition to remember and exercise sound judgment becomes no less than a theological decision that will impact his entire life.

The Logos of 3:23-35, therefore, presents a unified argument in support of the proposition of verses 21-22. Both the proposition and the initial motive clause are elaborated in the rhetoric of verses 23-35. First, the rhetor strengthens his promise of life through a series of motive clauses that stress the security and confidence of a person who exercises sound judgment (vv. 23-26). Second, he articulates the specific tenets of sound judgment and discretion (vv. 27-31). Finally, the rhetor concludes the lecture with a set of contrasts between Yahweh's intervention in the lives of those who exercise sound judgment and those who do not (vv. 32-35). The lecture, then, provides a systematic defense of its proposition by reminding the son of what he must not forget, providing arguments in support of the proposition, and making a final theological appeal.

b. Ethos

Throughout the logos, the rhetor fails to provide any rational proof, i.e., examples or enthymemes, for his claims. Consequently, the success of the rhetoric seems to hinge upon the rhetor's ethos. And yet, beyond the customary use of formal language and the vocative "my son," the rhetor makes little effort in the lecture to develop or bolster his ethos. Rather, he seems to assume that his audience

acknowledges his right to speak and his authority in the matters of sound judgment and discretion.

This presumption of a powerful pre-existent ethos is particularly apparent in the absence of first person pronouns in verse 21b. Instead of proposing that his son remember "my sound judgment and my discretion," the rhetor urges him to remember "sound judgment" (less "my") and "discretion" (less "my"). The implication is that what follows is not merely the father's understanding of sound judgment, but an absolute, authoritative statement of the reasons for, and the meaning of, sound judgment. Of course, what follows is the father's understanding of sound judgment. The rhetor/father, however, does not present his teaching as merely his understanding, but as sound judgment and discretion itself. In other lectures, such claims are made very carefully (e.g., 4:1-9). Here, the rhetor discards subtleties and directly identifies his teaching with sound judgment and discretion. Assuming a minimal rhetorical competency on the part of the rhetor, this bold move bespeaks the rhetor's position of high standing in the eyes of the audience.

The only source of ethos upon which the rhetor leans is Yahweh. All of the rhetor's claims about a secure and serene life are ultimately rooted in the actions of Yahweh. Thus, the rhetor acquires some ethos from the divine. Yet, even here, the rhetor speaks as an authority on what Yahweh will and will not do (3:26, 32-35), without advancing any logical arguments to support his assertions. Again, the rhetor assumes the position of an acknowledged authority and offers his, and only his, testimony.

The preceding assessment, however, may be an overstatement. As in previous lectures, our understanding of the rhetor's ethos is problematized by traditio-historical matters. Put simply, does the rhetor allude to or cite other texts? Here, scholars have observed similarities between the promises of 3:23-26 and texts in the books of Job,⁵⁰ Psalms,⁵¹ Isaiah,⁵² the Egyptian wisdom text of Amen-em-opet.⁵³ McKane also points out the possibility of recognizing an affinity between the imperatives of 3:27-31 and Deuteronomy, although he denies any relationship.⁵⁴ And others have proposed that some of the statements in 3:32-35 may depend on Deuteronomy.⁵⁵

The impact of these affinities on the rhetor's ethos hinges, not simply on similarity, but on whether the rhetor's audience would have recognized the use of other

⁵⁰ According to Delitzsch (*Proverbs*, 97), 3:24 echoes Job 11:18, 2:25 echoes Job 5:21, and 3:24b is "altogether the same as Job 5:24b."

⁵¹ Robert ("Les Attaches Littéraires Bibliques de Prov. I - IX," 64) sees numerous parallels between Proverbs 3:23-29 and Psalm 91. Cf. Toy, *Proverbs*, 75.

⁵² E.g., Proverbs 3:23 and Isaiah 46:8-11; Proverbs 3:25 and Isaiah 47:11. See Robert, "Les Attaches Littéraires Bibliques de Prov. I - IX," 64.

⁵³ Oesterley (*Proverbs*, 25) writes: "With these two verses [vv. 25-26] we must compare the *Teaching of Amen-em-ope* X. xiii. 19-xiv. 1:

*Be thou courageous before other people,
For one is safe in the hand of God.*

If we take the first line of vv. 25, 26 respectively we get this couplet:

*Be not afraid of sudden fear
For Jahweh shall be thy confidence.*

This is, in essence, parallel to the Egyptian couplet. It looks as though the compiler of *Proverbs*, in adapting Amen-em-ope's words, expanded them to form two couplets, just as has sometimes been done with a single lined popular proverb."

⁵⁴ McKane, *Proverbs*, 299.

⁵⁵ E.g., Paul Humbert ("Le Substantif *to'eba* et le Verbe *t'b* dans l'Ancien Testament," ZAW 72 [1960]: 224-26, 234-36) suggests that the phrase יהִי עֲבָתְךָ יְהוָה, may be borrowed from Deuteronomy. Cf. McKane, *Proverbs*, 301.

texts. If so, such borrowing would serve as an external proof and bolster the rhetor's authority. Certainly, the rhetor does not speak in a vacuum. Many of his statements are similar to both biblical and non-biblical texts (see f.n. 50-55). However, in no case does it appear that the rhetor directly cites (or borrows) existing religious traditions in order to support his claims or bolster his ethos. The alleged similarities simply do not carry the weight of such a claim. Compare, for example, the texts in Proverbs 3:21-35 to the texts to which they supposedly allude:

- Prov 3:24 When you sit down you will not be in dread;
you will lie down (שָׁכַבְתָּ) and your sleep will be pleasant.
- Job 11:18 And you will have confidence, because there is hope;
you will be protected and take your rest (תִּשְׁכַּב) in safety.
(NRSV)
- Job 5:24 You shall know that your tent is safe,
you shall inspect your fold and miss nothing. (NRSV)
- Prov 3:25 You will not be afraid (אֶל־תִּירָא) of sudden dread
(מִפְּחָד פְּתָאִים),
the ruin (מִשְׁאַת) that will come on the wicked
(רָשָׁעִים כִּי תִבָּא);
- Job 5:21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue,
and shall not fear (לֹא־תִירָא) destruction (מִשָּׂד) when it
comes (כִּי יָבוֹא). (NRSV)
- Isa 47:11 But evil shall come upon you,
which you cannot charm away;
disaster shall fall upon you,
which you will not be able to ward off;
and ruin (שׁוֹאָה) shall come on you suddenly (פְּתָאִים),
of which you know nothing. (NRSV)

While these texts do address similar topics (e.g., secure rest, fear of destruction), the similarities of thought and wording are not close enough to indicate reliance in either direction. Rather, it appears that the rhetor simply asserts his own testimony on these topics and expects his audience to respond because of his position as an acknowledged authority.

c. Pathos

In addition to his powerful pre-existent ethos, the rhetor uses several types of emotional appeals to persuade the son to take action. The first, and most dominant, of these emotional tools is pleasure. Initially, the rhetor claims that accepting sound judgment will grant the son genuine life (3:22). He intensifies this general emotional appeal with a twofold elaboration. First, the son's life will typify ultimate security, namely, he will not experience any trouble (3:23b) or worry (3:24a), but he will sleep serenely and soundly (3:24b). Second, because the son's confidence is rooted in Yahweh, his life will be devoid of fear regarding the **שָׂאָה** of the wicked (3:25), or any other disaster (3:26b). The prevalent emotion in these promises is the pleasure or serenity of absolute security.

The rhetor employs a different emotional strategy in the imperatives. Here, the rhetor implores the son to act in certain ways because of the unjustness or inappropriateness of any other action. When a person is able to pay and has the money in hand, it is inexcusable not to repay a debt (3:27-28). Similarly, it is a travesty to devise evil against a friend and drag that person into court when that person trusts you and has done nothing wrong (3:29-30). Such actions violate the

standards of human decency and solicit a response of anger in the audience. Thus, in this section of the proof, the rhetor seeks to persuade the son not to engage in these actions on the emotional basis of their outrage to society.⁵⁶

Finally, in the epilogue, both negative and positive pathos drive the rhetoric (3:32-35). The rhetor depicts the consequences of rejecting sound judgment and discretion in strong negative emotional terms: abomination to Yahweh, curse of Yahweh, derision, and disgrace. In contrast, the rhetor lauds the acceptance of sound judgment as the means of acquiring every pleasurable desire: the counsel of Yahweh, the blessing of Yahweh, the divine gift of favor, and honor. This contrast of negative and positive pathos provides a powerful conclusion to the lecture.

4. Summary & Conclusions

The preceding rhetorical analysis has enabled a fuller understanding of the rhetorical situation of the lecture in 3:21-35. First, this lecture, like all the lectures, comes from an educational setting in which a father/rhetor addresses his son/pupil. However, here the rhetor presumes the authority to make claims without the benefit of logical proof. Second, within this setting, the rhetor faces the same problem as in 3:1-12, namely, the son's failure (potential or real) to remember the tenets of sound judgment and, consequently, the son's failure to live by these tenets (v. 21). Here, this

⁵⁶ One should contrast the pathos of this section (3:27-31), based on the standards of human decency and outrage, to the pathos of 3:23-26 and 3:31-35 that is based on Yahweh's response to the son's actions.

problematic memory may result from the apparent success of the violent who reject the practice of sound judgment (v. 31).

In order to confront this rhetorical problem, the rhetor adopts a strategy in which he both reminds the son of the tenets of sound judgment and provides strong emotional persuasion to practice these doctrines. He claims that remembering discretion will bring genuine life to the son and then articulates the specific features of genuine life, namely security and confidence (vv. 23-26). Next, the rhetor reminds the son of what it means to practice sound judgment (vv. 27-31). The son must repay his debts and refuse to devise or engage in any scheme against his neighbor. Such actions, in the rhetoric, are travesties against human decency. Finally, the rhetor concludes the lecture with a passionate theological appeal (vv. 32-35). Rejecting sound judgment, and thus becoming crooked, wicked, scornful, and foolish, carries severe consequences. Such a person is an abomination to Yahweh, suffers the curse of Yahweh, is scorned by Yahweh, and obtains disgrace. On the other hand, those who exercise sound judgment, and thus become upright, righteous, humble, and wise, will receive Yahweh's counsel, his blessing, his favor, and honor.⁵⁷

The lecture of 3:21-35, then, is a systematic defense of the proposition of 3:21-22. The rhetor's strategy is a variation of the schema found in the previous lecture of 3:1-12. In response to the problem of forgetfulness and the failure to live wisely, the

⁵⁷ Or perhaps, in a Mediterranean honor and shame social system, those who act honorably will receive Yahweh's counsel. See above, pp. 129-130.

rhetor calls the son to remember and obey his teaching. This same problem and rhetorical strategy occurs in one other lecture, namely 4:20-27, to which I now turn.

Proverbs 4:20-27

1. Text and Translation⁵⁸

- 4:20 My son, pay attention to my speech;
incline your ear to my words.
4:21 Do not let them be lost from your eyes;
guard them in your heart,
4:22 for they are a life to those who find them,
healing to the whole body of each one.⁵⁹
4:23 More than any other concern, keep your heart
because the springs of life⁶⁰ [flow out] from it.
4:24 Keep a perverse mouth away from you,
and put devious lips far away from you.
4:25 Let your eyes look directly ahead
and let your eyelids [look] straight in front of you.
4:26 Observe⁶¹ the track of your feet,
and all your ways will be established.

⁵⁸ In order to maintain the rich body imagery of the rhetoric, my translation of this lecture is more literal than that of previous lectures. For example, instead of translating **אַל-יִלְיוּ מֵעֵינֶיךָ** as "do not lose sight" (cf. 3:21), here I translate this phrase as "do not let your eyes lose sight."

⁵⁹ The singular suffix **לְכָל-בָּשָׂרוֹ** is problematic in view of the preceding plural participle **לְמַצְאֵיהֶם**. Whybray (*Wisdom in Proverbs*, 46) and B. Gemser (*Sprüche Salomos*, 2nd edition [Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr {Paul Siebeck}, 1963], 32) resolve the apparent grammatical conflict by emending **בָּשָׂרוֹ** to **בָּשָׂרָם**. However, the lack of textual evidence in support of emendation favors reading the singular suffix as a distributive of the preceding plural (so, Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 114; Scott, *Proverbs*, 217. See GKC 1451, mn).

⁶⁰ **תּוֹצְאוֹת**, literally "outgoings," or "sources" (See KB 1022-1023, BDB 426).

⁶¹ Lexically, **פָּלַם** may be translated as "keep straight" or "make level" (NRSV and NIV, respectively), or "take heed to" (RSV). See KB 764 and G.R. Driver, "Notes on the Psalms," *JTS* 36 (1935): 150-151. Here, the context favors the translation "survey" (i.e., "observe"). **פָּלַם** identifies the purpose of the preceding jussives ("let your eyes look directly ahead, and let your eyelids [look] straight in front of you," v. 25), namely, the son must look straight ahead in order to survey or observe his path. Then, the second line of verse 26 expresses the resultant security of this careful attention ("and all your ways will be established").

4:27 Do not swerve to the right or the left;
keep your foot away from evil.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

Although most scholars recognize the beginning of a new lecture in 4:20, some regard 4:20-27 as the continuation and conclusion of the previous lecture (4:10-19).⁶² Such a construal of literary/rhetorical limits is difficult to accept. First, 4:18-19 provides a summary conclusion to the rhetoric of 4:10-17, and thus denotes the conclusion of the previous lecture (see above, pp. 152-153). Second, 4:20-27 does not continue the contrast of the two ways from 4:10-19.⁶³ Rather, in 4:20-27, the rhetoric is structured around body-imagery, with only secondary concern for the path from which the son must not swerve (4:25-27). Third, the vocative **בְּנִי** (4:20) is accompanied by the customary terms for introducing a new lecture in Proverbs 1-7.⁶⁴ These delimiting features present strong evidence for the beginning of a new speech in 4:20.

Like the other lectures of group II, this lecture lacks a clear summary-conclusion.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, scholars generally concur that this speech ends in 4:27

⁶² E.g., Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 58.

⁶³ E.g., McKane (*Proverbs*, 310) claims that 4:20-27 does continue the contrast of the two ways from 4:10-19.

⁶⁴ **קָשַׁב**, **נָטָה**, **לֹא**, and **שָׁמַר** (4:20-21). As I have already argued, when **בְּנִי** is resumptive it is accompanied by imperatives that appeal for specific actions. See above, pp. 90-91.

⁶⁵ Compare this non-feature of group II to the summary conclusions of group I (1:19, 2:20-22, 4:18-19). In an effort to alleviate this omission the LXX adds two verses to the end of the lecture:

because of the beginning of a new lecture in 5:1.⁶⁶ Here, another vocative 'בני + general imperatives introduces a text that, in contrast to the rhetoric of 4:20-27, presents a warning about the strange woman and the dangers of promiscuity.⁶⁷

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

Like 3:1-12 and 3:21-35, the lecture of 4:20-27 addresses the problem (potential or real) of the son carelessly forgetting and thus not obeying the father's instruction. Thus, this lecture endeavors to reverse the son's lackadaisical attitude towards the father's teaching. Of special interest here is the virtual absence of artistic proofs to accomplish this rhetorical goal. For example, although the logos of the lecture presents a cogent development of the proposition, it lacks any rational proof.

^{27a} For God knows the ways on the right,
but those on the left are crooked.

^{27b} But he will make your paths straight,
and he will lead your way in peace.

^{27a} **oḏlouj gar taj ek deciwn oiden o[geoj,**
diestrammenai de-eiṣin ai[et apisterwn

^{27b} **auṭoj deoṭqaj poihsei taj trociaj sou,**
taj deporeiaj sou eḥ eiḥn[^] proacei,

In a similar effort, Whybray (*Wisdom in Proverbs*, 47) transposes verses 26 and 27 in order to provide a strong positive conclusion. Other scholars have not accepted either emendation as original.

⁶⁶ Scott (*Proverbs*, 52) considers 5:21-23 to be the conclusion of 4:20-27. He argues that 4:20-27 "lacks the usual concluding statement of consequence" and that 5:21-23 is "more suitable following 4:27 than in its present position." Scott's hypothesis has not found acceptance or even discussion among scholars. 1) There is no supporting textual evidence for his rearrangement. 2) 5:21-23 is almost completely devoid of the body imagery that characterizes 4:20-27. The only body image is "the eyes of the Lord" (5:21). 3) 5:21-23 hardly offers a plausible summary-conclusion of 4:20-27.

⁶⁷ This delimitation is also supported by the unified rhetorical argument within 4:20-27 (see my analysis of the logos).

Similarly, the rhetor makes little effort to utilize artistic ethos or pathos in his argument. Instead, as the following analysis will demonstrate, the suasiveness of this lecture relies on an extraordinarily strong external (inartistic) proof, namely the pre-existent authority of the rhetor.

a. Logos

The rhetor's aim in this lecture is to persuade the son to adopt an attitude and a course of action, namely, to remember and obey. Consequently, like previous lectures, we may classify 4:20-27 as a deliberative speech and outline the lecture according to the typical structure of Western deliberative rhetoric.

Proem - 4:20a

Proposition - 4:20-22

Proof - 4:23-26

Epilogue - 4:27

Once again, the proem consists of the vocative **בני** ("my son," 4:20a).

Throughout this speech, the rhetor emphasizes both the authority and personal relationship suggested by **בני**. On the one hand, he asserts his authority by the use of imperatives (4:23, 24, 26, 27). On the other hand, the rhetor sets these imperatives within a personal mode of address. He calls the son to remember "my words" and "my speech" (4:20), he uses singular imperatives rather than plurals (4:23, 24, 27), and he further personalizes the imperatives through the use of second person singular pronouns in every verse except verse 22.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ For example, the rhetor mentions "your ears" (4:20b), "your eyes" (4:21a, 25), "your heart" (4:21b, 23a), "from you" (4:24ab), "your eyelids" (4:25b), and "your feet" (4:26, 27).

In a somewhat unusual move, the rhetor sets forth a proposition that includes a proposal typical of the first group of lectures and a proposal typical of the second group of lectures. In verse 20, the rhetor employs terms from the category of verbs that stress listening, paying attention, receiving, and pursuing the teaching of the rhetor ("My son, pay attention [קשב] to my words, to my speech stretch [נטה] forth your ears"). Thus, as in the lectures of group I, he implores the son to give him his full attention.⁶⁹ However, in verse 21, the rhetor employs terms from the second category of verbs which emphasize not forgetting, or losing, his instruction ("Let them not be lost [לֹא יִשָּׁח] from your eyes, guard [שמר] them in the midst of your heart"). Thus, as in the other lectures of group II, he urges the son not to forget his teaching.⁷⁰ This dual proposition of 4:20-21 seems to cut across the categorization that I have proposed in this dissertation. However, despite initial appearances, this speech does not negate my thesis that the ten lectures may be classified into three discrete categories on the basis of their propositions and rhetorical strategies. Careful attention to the rhetoric of 4:20-27 reveals that this lecture does not argue for both the attention of the son (v. 20, group I) and the retention of the rhetor's words (v. 21, group II), but only for retention and obedience. Outside the proposition, the rhetor does not advance any argument, like the lectures of group I, for paying attention to him. Concern for this proposal vanishes in the lecture. Instead, the ensuing proof exclusively defends the second proposal, namely, not to forget the rhetor's teaching. Consequently, despite the dual

⁶⁹ Cf. 1:8, 2:1-4, 4:1, 4:10.

⁷⁰ Cf. 3:1, 3:21.

proposition, this lecture is not a hybrid, but typical of the other calls to remember and obey.

Like the other lectures of group II, the rhetor's initial argument in support of his proposition asserts a connection between remembering his teaching and the son's quality of life (cf. 3:2, 3:22). Those who find and keep the rhetor's words, rather than losing them, will gain life itself ("because they are a life to those who find them," v. 22a). As in previous lectures, this promise of life refers not only to physical well-being ("healing to the whole body of each one," v. 22b), but also to prosperous or successful living.

The proof (4:23-26) develops the ideas of the proposition (4:20-22) in three ways. First, the proposition implored the son to remember and keep the rhetor's teaching (4:21). The proof, like the other lectures of group II, reminds the son of this teaching through a series of three exhortations.⁷¹ Second, the proposition introduced body imagery into the rhetoric (e.g., "ear" [v. 20b], "eyes" [v. 21a], "heart" [v. 21b], and "healing to the whole body" [v. 22b]). The rhetor further develops this imagery in the proof and uses it to interlock the exhortations. Each part of the "whole body" (v. 22b) becomes the object of instruction (e.g., "heart" [v. 23a], "mouth" [v. 24a], "lips" [v. 24b], "eyes" [v. 25a], "eyelids" [v. 25b], and "feet" [v. 26a]). Third, the proposition asserted that remembering the rhetor's teaching will bring life and healing

⁷¹ Scholars typically identify five exhortations in 4:23-27 (e.g., Whybray, *Proverbs*, 81). Against this reckoning, verses 25 and 26 present a single exhortation, and verse 27 is an epilogue that summarizes the preceding rhetoric (see above). Thus, the three exhortations are:

Exhortation #1: Imperative (v. 23a) + Motive (v. 23b)

Exhortation #2: Imperative (v. 24a) + Imperative (v. 24b)

Exhortation #3: Jussives (v. 25) + Imperative (v. 26a) + Motive (v. 26b)

to the son (v. 22). The proof, again like the other lectures of group II, elaborates this connection between remembering and life (e.g., vv. 23b, 26b).

The first exhortation implores the son to protect his heart (לִּבְךָ) more than anything else ("More than any other concern, keep your heart," 4:23a). Earlier, in the proposition, the rhetor urged the son to guard his teaching in "your heart" (לִּבְךָ, v. 21b). In this context, לִּבְךָ denotes the son's innermost being, which includes the ideas of his heart as the source of his will, his emotions, and his character.⁷² This understanding of heart as "innermost being" is confirmed by the motive clause that attends the imperative. The son must guard his heart "because the springs of life [flow out] from it" (v. 23b). His heart is the source or fountainhead of his life, i.e., the source of his will, his emotions, and his character. Consequently, the condition of the son's heart will determine the course and well-being of his life. So, with this motive clause, the rhetor not only provides a reason for the preceding imperative to "keep

⁷² The word "heart" (לֵב or לִב) occurs sixteen times in the lectures of Proverbs 1-9. In these texts, the core or basic meaning of לֵב is "innermost being" (e.g., 2:10, 3:3, 6:21, 7:3). On the basis of this fundamental idea, לֵב takes other, more specific nuances in these chapters: 1) the whole person (3:5, 5:12), 2) a person's will (3:1, 4:4), 3) the source of person's emotions or desires (6:25), and 4) the source of a person's character (6:32, 7:7, 10, 25).

Here, in 4:23, it is difficult to limit the meaning of לֵב to any one of these specific nuances. McKane's translation of לֵב as "mind" (Proverbs, 217) and Whybray's interpretation (Proverbs, 82) of the imperative as "protect it [the mind] from wrong thoughts" are too restrictive. First, the meaning of לֵב is much broader than "mind." Second, the rhetor does not specify the object against which the son must guard his heart. Consequently, the warning is a general appeal to guard the inner-person against all threats.

On the meaning of "heart" in Proverbs, see Kidner, *Proverbs*, 68; G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. VII, trans. D. E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), s.v. "לֵב," by H.-J. Fabry, 399-437; and Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 60-61.

your heart" (v. 23a), but also elaborates the fundamental assertion of the proposition, namely, that remembering his teaching will enhance the son's quality of life (v. 22).

Second, the rhetor reminds the son to remove or keep all forms of deceptive speech away from him. Here, he utilizes the body image of the mouth: "Keep a perverse mouth away from you" (4:24a). To this imperative, however, the rhetor does not add a motive clause, as in the first exhortation, but a second imperative that strengthens the first. This second imperative employs the body image of the lips: "and put devious lips far away from you" (4:24b).

There may be an underlying connection between the first imperative ("keep your heart," v. 23) and these exhortations for non-deceptive speech.⁷³ Elsewhere in Proverbs, the sages recognized a relationship between the heart (inner-person) and the tongue (speech). For example,

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

My child, if your heart is wise,
my heart too will be glad.
My soul will rejoice
when your lips speak what is right. (23:15-16, NRSV)

The mind (מִן) of the wise makes their speech judicious,
and adds persuasiveness to their lips. (16:23, NRSV)⁷⁴

In these texts, the heart is the source and/or regulator of human speech. A wise heart causes lips to speak what is right (23:15-16, 16:23). An evil heart operates with

⁷³ So e.g., Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 116; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 82.

⁷⁴ See also 12:23, 15:7,14,28, 17:20, 22:17-18, 24:2, 26:25.

smooth or burning lips (דִּלְקִים).⁷⁵ Consequently, the exhortations of verses 23 and 24 may be related within a cause and effect schema. The son must keep his heart because his heart is the source of his speech. He must also guard his speech because his speech reveals the condition of his heart. However, while this understanding of heart-tongue may account for the relationship of verses 23 and 24, the rhetor does not make this connection explicit.

The final exhortation is the most complex of the three. Here, the rhetor begins with two jussives that refer to two more body images, namely the eyes and eyelids: "Let your eyes look directly ahead, and let your eyelids [look] straight in front of you," (4:25). Next, in an imperative, the rhetor expresses the purpose of such a singular vision. The son's eyes and eyelids should be focused straight ahead so that he can carefully scrutinize the path of his feet ("Observe the track of your feet," v. 26a). Finally, the rhetor adds a motive clause that expresses the benefit of remembering this admonition for the son's quality of life: "and all your ways will be established" (v. 26b). The logic of this exhortation is elementary: eyesight that is not distracted by peripheral matters is able to devote complete attention to the well-being of the whole body and thus make life secure.

⁷⁵ The cause/effect relationship between the heart and action also underlies many other statements and admonitions in the Old Testament. For example: "Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart" (Deut 6:6); "Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer (Deut 10:16); "Moreover, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live" (Deut 30:6). Each of these texts presupposes that the heart is the source and regulator of human action. The heart must be circumcised for a person to be able to love the Lord "with all your heart" and obey (Deut 30:6, 10:16). Further, one must keep the words of the covenant in "your heart," because, the writer assumes, the heart is the source of obedience.

Once again, there may be an underlying connection between the rhetor's concern for the son's eyes and his earlier exhortation to "keep your heart" (v. 23), namely, what the eye sees is what the heart receives.⁷⁶ Earlier, in the proposition, this relationship was explicit: what must not be lost from "your eyes" must be guarded in "your heart" (v. 21). Elsewhere in Proverbs, the sages also affirm this association. For example:

The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,
and good news refreshes the body. (15:30, NRSV)

My child, give me your heart
and let your eyes observe my ways. (23:26, NRSV)⁷⁷

Thus, the exhortation to direct "your eyes" straight ahead may also be related to the first exhortation ("keep your heart") in a cause/effect schema. The son must keep his eyes focused because they will enlighten or darken his heart.

The final verse of this lecture (v. 27) may be read as either a conclusion to the exhortation of verses 25-26 or the epilogue of the entire lecture. As a conclusion to verses 25-26, the rhetor summarizes the command to look straight ahead (v. 25) and carefully observe the path (v. 26) by demanding that the son not deviate from the path upon which he is walking ("Do not swerve to the right or the left," v. 27a).⁷⁸ These verses are also connected by the repetition of body images ("your feet," v. 26; "your

⁷⁶ Although the connection between the heart and tongue is widely acknowledged, I am unaware of any scholar who has suggested the possibility that the exhortation to keep "your eyes" may be an elaboration of the admonition to keep "your heart."

⁷⁷ See also 20:8-9, 21:2.

⁷⁸ So Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 117.

foot," v. 27). However, the summary character of verse 27 appears to extend beyond the preceding exhortation. For example, the rhetor demands that the son "keep (הִסֵּר) your foot away" from evil, just as in the second exhortation he urged the son to "keep (הִסֵּר) a perverse mouth away from you"(v. 24). In addition, verse 27 also seems to reflect back on the proposition (v. 21). Like the proposition, and unlike the three positive exhortations, this verse takes the form of a negative imperative ("Do not swerve"). Further, the final position of this imperative may suggest a double entendre, namely, that the son must not swerve from single minded vision and he must not swerve from or lose sight of the rhetor's teaching.

b. Ethos

Once again, as in 3:21-35, the logos of this lecture is completely devoid of rational proof. The rhetor furnishes no inartistic (external) and few artistic (internal) proofs to demonstrate the veracity of his demands or his promises. Instead, the suasive power of the rhetoric relies on the ethos of the speaker. The rhetor's success hinges on whether or not the son recognizes his authority and trusts him.

What artistic devices, then, does the rhetor employ in this lecture to secure this credibility with the audience? Oddly, despite the rhetor's heavy reliance on his ethos for the success of his instruction, he applies little artistic invention to this dimension of the speech. He addresses his audience as "my son" and speaks in formal language (i.e., poetry).⁷⁹ He also presents himself as being solely concerned for the son's well

⁷⁹ On the use of these devices to bolster the rhetor's ethos, see pp. 104-105.

being, i.e., the son's secure acquisition of genuine life (v. 22, 23, 26). However, beyond these modest efforts, the rhetor shows no interest in developing his ethos within the lecture. Unlike previous lectures, he does not associate his teaching with God or Yahweh (cf. 2:6, 3:4-12, 3:26,32-34), nor does he mention or identify his teaching with wisdom (cf. 2:1-3, 4:1-9).⁸⁰ Further, there is no evidence that he offers any citation from the religious traditions of his audience (cf. 1:16, 17).⁸¹

The phenomenon of rhetoric that relies on the speaker's ethos, yet shows little concern for the development of ethos in the speech, is unexplained by traditional Western theory.⁸² However, George Kennedy repeatedly observes the same

⁸⁰ Whybray and McKane offer alternative explanations for the lack of any reference to wisdom or Yahweh in this lecture. McKane (*Proverbs*, 302-03) argues that this absence is due to the lack of Yahwistic reinterpretation of the text. Similarly, Whybray (*Proverbs*, 81) claims that this instruction has been left undisturbed by additions that attempted to identify the teacher's instruction with wisdom and by theological additions. For both scholars, then, 4:20-27 represents an early, undisturbed example of an instruction.

Although I disagree with Whybray and McKane's hypotheses regarding the reinterpretation or double redaction of the lectures, I certainly agree that 4:20-27 is a complete lecture. However, my analysis, unlike that by Whybray, McKane, and others, reaches beyond this conclusion to reckon with the rhetoric of this instruction, namely, the strategy that 4:20-27 employs to persuade its audience to accept the rhetor's teaching and the rhetorical significance of the lack of any reference to God, Yahweh, or wisdom.

⁸¹ Robert ("Les Attaches Littéraires Bibliques de Prov. I - IX," 61) asserts that the phrase "do not swerve to the right or the left" (4:27) is deuteronomistic (cf. Deut 5:32, 17:11, 28:14, Josh 23:6, II Kgs 22:2). However, as McKane (*Proverbs*, 311) points out, both the verb and object of this phrase in Proverbs 4:27 differ from those in Robert's parallels. Thus, McKane appropriately concludes that "this kind of general correspondence in language and idiom cannot do the work to which Robert puts it. It shows no more than that the authors of Deuteronomy and Proverbs wrote in the same language and sometimes used the same idioms."

⁸² Kennedy (*Classical Rhetoric*, 68) explains that "In Aristotle's view ethos should be accomplished through the speech and not be a matter of authority or the previous reputation of the orator (1356a9-10). The reason for this is that only ethos projected in this way is artistic. The authority of the speaker would be analogous to his role as witness and would thus be *atechnos*, something not created but used by the orator. This doubtless seemed all the more logical to Aristotle because of the common situation in Greek lawcourts, where the litigants

phenomenon in other non-Western rhetorics. His cross-cultural study leads him to conclude that,

Authority from a position in a hierarchy is a powerful means of persuasion that is brought to bear on a rhetorical situation, sometimes without any specific reference to it in the words that are spoken or written. The presence of the speaker or the name of the author is sufficient. It has continued to be important throughout history as a basis of power by rulers, prophets, priests, teachers, military and civilian officials, employers, and parents. Often persons in these positions have no need to supply reasons for their pronouncements to be effective.⁸³

Kennedy's insights are helpful for understanding the suasive power of this and other lectures that rely on the speaker's ethos yet show little or no concern for the artistic development of ethos in the lecture. This strategy denotes the rhetor's reliance on a strong external or pre-existent authority, namely, the authority of a teacher/sage. The rhetor need not bother with the artistic development of his ethos because he already occupies a position of high esteem in the eyes of his audience. Further, because of this standing, he also finds it unnecessary to provide rational arguments in support of his proposition. Instead, the rhetor speaks as an acknowledged authority and presumes that his rhetoric will succeed on this basis.

c. Pathos

Emotional arguments supporting the rhetor's appeal, like artistic ethos, are almost completely lacking in this lecture. The rhetor does play upon the son's desire

were often persons of no particular reputation who had purchased speeches from logographers or professional speechwriters. A logographer's duties came to include the artistic creation of a credible ethos for the client."

⁸³ Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 42.

for the secure acquisition of genuine life by promising that remembering and obeying his instruction will enable the son to fulfill this desire (v. 22). He also elaborates this promise in verses 23b and 26b. However, unlike the other lectures of group II, which make extensive use of this pathetic argument, the elaboration of the promise of life in this lecture is minimal (cf. 3:2-10, 3:22-26, 32-35). Thus, the lecture as a whole is devoid of any sustained effort to manipulate the emotions of the son in order to motivate him to action.

This lack of pathos, like the absence of rational proof, may be attributed to the strong ethos presupposed by the rhetor. Because of his position as a trustworthy authority, he is able to disregard the need for both logical proof and also pathetic proof and still expect a successful outcome to his lecture. Ultimately, the suaveness of the rhetoric leans on a simple unspoken claim, "because I said so."

4. Summary & Conclusions

Scholars have long recognized that Proverbs 4:20-27 is the product of an educational setting in which a father/teacher instructed his son/pupil(s). Rhetorical analysis builds on this consensus by posing new questions about this setting, about the problem faced by the rhetor, and about the rhetorical strategy developed within the lecture to deal with this problem. Thus, attentiveness to the rhetoric of the father contributes new insights to our understanding of the lecture.

The preceding rhetorical analysis has revealed that the rhetor of 4:20-27 not only occupied a hierarchical position over the son, but relied almost exclusively on this position of authority for the success of his rhetoric. Nonetheless, the primary

problem confronted by the rhetor was the failure (potential or real) of the son to remember and keep his teaching (4:21). Such a careless disregard for the rhetor's words may have been the result of a lack of appreciation for the importance of what the rhetor was teaching. In other words, the son did not fully appreciate the relationship between the rhetor's commands and genuine life.

There may be, however, a more basic cause for the rhetor's concern about the son's memory in this and the other calls to remember and obey (3:1-12, 3:21-35). Van Leeuwen suggests that the oral nature of the culture lies beneath this appeal.

In an oral culture, only what is "known" is remembered. Hence, the tremendous emphasis on remembering the parent's utterances and the memorable, poetic form in which the instructions and, especially, the short sayings are couched.⁸⁴

In an oral culture, the son's memory of the father's instructions is the essential prerequisite for obedience. What the son does not remember, he cannot obey. Thus, the rhetor's immense interest in calling the son to remember and reminding the son of the content of his instruction is not only the result of specific threats (i.e., the lack of appreciation for the rhetor's teaching), but the product of an oral society.

In order to quell the son's forgetfulness in 4:20-27, the rhetor adopts the same basic strategy employed in 3:1-12 and 3:21-35. First, the rhetor sets forth a proposition that implores the son not to lose sight of his teaching, but to exercise careful retention (4:21). Then, he immediately asserts the importance of his teaching for the acquisition of genuine life. His words must not be carelessly forgotten because

⁸⁴ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 60.

they are life itself (4:22). In the proof, the rhetor develops this proposition in two ways. 1) He reminds the son of his words through a series of positive imperatives: keep your heart (4:23), keep your mouth (4:24), and keep your eyes (4:25). 2) He briefly elaborates the connection between his commandments and the acquisition of life, e.g., keep your heart because "the springs of life [flow out] from it" (4:23). Finally, the rhetor concludes the lecture with a negative imperative that urges the son not to "swerve to the right or the left" from his chosen path, namely, the path outlined by the rhetor's teaching.

The suasive power of this rhetoric hinges almost entirely on the son's previous acceptance of the speaker's authority. The speaker does not argue his proposition with rational proof, nor does he make extensive use of the son's emotions to prompt a positive response. Further, the rhetor expresses little concern for the artistic development of his ethos. Instead, the success of the rhetoric depends on the son's acceptance of the speaker's authority prior to the speech-act. In this lecture, it seems that the rhetor expects this prior authority to be sufficient for the task at hand.

Conclusions: The Rhetoric of the Calls to Remember and Obey

Form critical analysis has demonstrated that Proverbs 3:1-12, 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 belong to the genre of instruction literature.⁸⁵ Consequently, scholars have generally regarded these texts as three unexceptional members of the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9. Against this consensus, my rhetorical analysis has revealed that, while

⁸⁵ E.g., Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 33-47.

3:1-12, 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 do share basic traits with the other seven lectures, several unique features distinguish these three texts as a discrete subset within Proverbs 1-9, namely, calls to remember and obey.

First, the propositions of these lectures uniquely stress that the son not forget the rhetor's teaching but instead exercise careful retention and obedience. Twice, the rhetor advances the first half of this common proposition by utilizing the image of eyesight: Do not lose sight of my teaching (3:21a, 4:21a). In the other lecture, the proposal is straightforward: "do not forget my teaching" (3:1a). The second half of the proposal is similar in all three lectures: "may your heart observe (נִצֵּר) my commandments" (3:1b), "guard (שָׁמַר) sound judgment and discretion" (3:21b), and "guard (שָׁמַר) them in your heart" (4:21).

When contrasted to the first group of lectures (1:8-19, 2:1-22, 4:1-9, 4:10-19), this common proposition sets these three lectures apart. The propositions of group I (the calls to apprenticeship) implore the son to pay careful attention to the father's rhetoric, e.g., listen (1:8, 4:1, 4:10), receive (2:1, 4:10) pay attention (2:2, 4:4, incline your heart (2:2), cry out (2:3), and seek (2:4). While these ideas are dominant in group I, they are almost completely lacking in the propositions of group II. Only once in group II does the rhetor make any appeal for the son to pay attention (4:20), and here, the rhetor quickly passes over this demand to pursue a greater interest in the son's memory and obedience. Thus, in contrast to the propositions of group I, the

lectures of group II assert a common proposal for the son to remember and act upon the father's teaching.⁸⁶

A second feature that distinguishes 3:1-12, 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 as a subset of lectures is their initial promise of life and the elaboration of this promise in the proof of each lecture. In each of these lectures, the rhetor supports his proposition with an initial claim that obedience will enhance the son's quality of life (3:2, 3:22, 4:22). Then, in the proof of each lecture, he elaborates the connection between remembering and obeying his teaching and the acquisition of genuine life.⁸⁷

Again, when this feature of the rhetoric of 3:1-12, 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 is contrasted to the other lectures of Proverbs 1-9, these three lectures stand out in bold relief. Only two other lectures in Proverbs 1-9 mention life as a benefit of obedience (4:10 and 7:2). However, unlike the calls to remember and obey, the promises of life in these lectures are not the subject of elaboration in the ensuing proof. The theme of life and its elaboration in the proof is a unique feature of group II.

Third, the fundamental rhetorical strategy of 3:1-12, 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 differs from the other lectures. In each of these three lectures, the rhetor seeks to remind the son of his teaching through the use of imperatives. In 3:1-12, the proof consists of four sets of imperatives that alternate between positive and negative

⁸⁶ For the contrast with group III, see chp. 5.

⁸⁷ The elaboration of an enhanced quality of life is strongest in 3:1-12, where the rhetor enumerates four specific qualities of life (social reputation, lack of problems, good health, and wealth) that come as the result of obedience to his teaching. The motif of life is also strong in 3:21-35 where the rhetor promises a life of care-free confidence rooted in the protection of Yahweh. The lecture of 4:20-27 also elaborates the initial promise of life, but not to the extent of the others.

admonitions. In 3:21-35, the rhetor employs a series of five negative imperatives to set forth the specific tenets of sound judgment. And in 4:20-27, the proof consists of four positive imperatives.

Although scholars typically regard the use of short, crisp imperatives as an "essential" feature of the instruction genre,⁸⁸ these three lectures are the only ones in Proverbs 1-9 that make extensive use of such imperatives to express the rhetor's teaching. The lectures of group I do not explicate the rhetor's teaching at all (see chp. 3), and the lectures of group III only employ imperatives as part of much longer arguments (see chp. 5).⁸⁹

Thus, the common rhetorical strategies of 3:1-12; 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 mark these lectures off as a subset within the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9. These lectures set forth a common proposition, uphold life as a reward for remembrance, and use imperatives to remind the son of the father's teaching. Certainly, within this common strategy, there are variations. For example, only positive imperatives are deployed in the proof of 4:20-27, only negative imperatives in the proof of 3:21-35, and an alternating pattern of positive and negative imperatives in 3:1-12. In the same way,

⁸⁸ McKane, *Proverbs*, 3; Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 51.

⁸⁹ To some extent, scholars have recognized this unique feature of these three lectures. For example, McKane (*Proverbs*, 7) includes 3:1-12, 3:21-35, and chp. 4 as "pieces which are strictly Instruction." However, he inexplicably includes 1:8-19, 5:1-23, 6:1-5, 6:20-35, 7:1-5, and 7:24-27 in this same category. Whybray (*Wisdom in Proverbs*, 46) also refers to :3:1-10 and 4:20-27 as lectures that he considers to be "a good example of the discourses which formed the original material in these chapters." He, however, excludes 3:21-35 from this list and includes 1:8-19 and 4:10-18. Thus, McKane and Whybray have taken steps in the direction that I am advocating in this dissertation. The primary difference between my categorization and theirs is the use of rhetorical features to distinguish the subsets.

the propositions and the elaborations of the promise of life vary in these lectures. However, this variance, unlike the difference between these three lectures and the others in Proverbs 1-9, is within a common rhetorical strategy. Therefore, although the form of these lectures is instruction, within this genre 3:1-12, 3:21-35, and 4:20-27 constitute a distinctive subset, namely, calls to remember and obey.

Chapter Five

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF GROUP III: WARNINGS AGAINST ILLICIT SEXUAL RELATIONS

The third and final subset of lectures in Proverbs 1-9 consists of 5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27. To be sure, this particular grouping of lectures is not unusual. Scholars frequently recognize an affinity between these speeches, namely, that each of these lectures warn the son against illicit sexual relations with a "strange" (זָרָה; 5:3, 7:5) or "foreign" (נָכְרִיָּה; 5:20, 6:24, 7:5) woman. However, in addition to their common topic, the rhetoric of these lectures also sets them apart from the two previous subsets. On the one hand, unlike the calls to apprenticeship (subset I), these speeches do not merely urge the son to listen and accept the father's teaching, they explicate his teaching and demand obedience.¹ On the other hand, unlike the calls to remember and obey (subset II), these speeches do not exhibit any concern for the son's memory. Further, in contrast to the rhetorical style of the calls to remember and obey,

¹ Although 2:1-22 mentions the strange woman, I exclude it from this subset of warnings. 1) Unlike 5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27, the lecture of 2:1-22 is not entirely devoted to the danger of the strange woman. Most of this lecture consists of an explicit appeal to accept the rhetor's teaching (i.e., the call to apprenticeship; 2:1-11, 20-22). Of the remaining verses, four promise deliverance from evil men (2:12-15) and three promise deliverance from the strange woman (2:16-18). 2) In 2:1-22, the rhetor promises that accepting his call to apprenticeship will rescue (לְהַצִּילָהּ) the son from both the evil men and the strange woman (2:12-15, 16-18). In contrast to this promise, the lectures of 5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27 demand that the son take precautionary actions against the strange woman.

these final lectures present elaborate argumentation on a single theme. Thus, both thematic and rhetorical features demarcate 5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27 as a subset of lectures within Proverbs 1-9.

Proverbs 5:1-23

1. Text and Translation

- 5:1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
incline your ear to my understanding
5:2 in order to guard discretion
and so that your lips will protect² knowledge.
5:3 For the lips of the strange woman drip honey,
her mouth is smoother than oil.
5:4 But her outcome is bitter like wormwood,
sharp as a two-edged sword.
5:5 Her feet go down to death,
her steps lay hold of Sheol.
5:6 She³ does not⁴ observe⁵ the path of life,
her tracks are unstable and she is unaware of it.⁶

² The verb (לְשׁוֹרֵךְ) is governed by the preceding infinitive (לְשׁוֹמֵר). See GKC 114r.

³ It is possible to translate תִּפְלֹס and תִּדַּע as second masculine singulars ("Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them" [AV], see also Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos*, 34) rather than third feminine singulars (so Scott, *Proverbs*, 53; McKane, *Proverbs*, 217; and NIV, NRSV, NJV). In my opinion, third feminine singulars make better sense in this context than second masculine singulars. Thus, verse 6 is a continuation of the description of the strange woman from verses 3-5.

⁴ The MT (אֲרַחַח הַיָּמִים פֶּן־תִּפְלֹס) makes little, if any, sense and is probably corrupt. My translation, like that of most scholars, follows all or most of the ancient versions and reads בִּלְ or לֹא for the conjunction (so NJV, NRSV, NIV, McKane, *Proverbs*, 314, et al.)

⁵ On the translation of פִּלַּס as "observe" (5:6 and 21) see p. 192, fn. 61.

⁶ D. Winton Thomas ("Notes on Some Passages in the Book of Proverbs," *JTS* 38 [1937]: 59-60; followed by Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 47; and McKane, *Proverbs*, 314-315) argues that תִּדַּע is not derived from the Hebrew root יָדַע ("to know"), but a second Hebrew root יָדַע related to the Arabic root *wd'* ("to be quiet"). Thus, he translates this line: "her ways are unstable, she is not quiet" (for a bibliography of Thomas' work on יָדַע, see J.A. Emerton,

- 5:7 Now my son,⁷ listen to me;
do not turn aside from the words of my mouth.
- 5:8 Keep your path far away from her,
do not go near the entrance of her house.
- 5:9 Lest you give your honor to others;
and your years to a cruel one.
- 5:10 Lest strangers satisfy themselves on your strength,
your toil [be consumed]⁸ in the house of a foreigner.
- 5:11 You will groan at your outcome,
when you are completely consumed.⁹
- 5:12 Then you will say, "How I hated discipline,
and my heart scornfully rejected reprimand!
- 5:13 I did not listen to the voice of my teachers,
I did not incline my ear to my instructors.
- 5:14 I have come to the point of total ruin
in the midst of the public assembly."¹⁰

"A Consideration of Some Alleged Meaning of *yd'* in Hebrew," *JSS* 15 [1970]: 148-50). More recently, the evidence for Thomas' translation has been strongly challenged. See William Johnstone, "YD' II, 'Be Humbled, Humiliated?'," *VT* 41 (1991): 49-62; and J.A. Emerton, "A Further Consideration of D.W. Thomas' Theories About *Yada*," *VT* 41 (1991): 145-63.

⁷ Textual evidence and contextual arguments favor the emendation of the MT plurals, בְּנִים שְׁמַעוּ ("listen, my sons") and אַל תִּסְוֶהוּ ("do not turn aside"), to singulars (so NRSV, Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 35). 1) The LXX reads a singular in v. 7a (αὐτὸς ἀκούε [= בְּנִי שְׁמַע, "my son, listen"]) and in the next line (μὴ ἀκρούῃς ποῖος ἄλ [= אַל תִּסְוֶהוּ]). 2) The preceding (vv. 1-5) and subsequent singular address (vv. 8-10f) recommends the singular in v. 7 (so Toy, *Proverbs*, 107-08). 3) Scott (*Proverbs*, 53) argues that the scribes mistook the enclitic ם of בְּנִים as a plural marker and consequently changed the verbs in verse 7 from singulars to plurals. 4) Comparison to the plural address in 4:1-2 also strengthens the case for emendation. In 4:1-2, unlike 5:7, the use of plurals in the MT is consistent and the LXX of 4:1-2 retains the plurals.

⁸ I am supplying the verb שָׁבַע from the preceding line.

⁹ Literally, "when your flesh and body are consumed/ended."

¹⁰ The sentence, כִּמְעַט הָיִיתִי בְּכָל־רָע / בְּתוֹךְ קָהָל וְעֵדָה, is idiomatic. The basic meaning has been variously translated: "Now I am facing final ruin / in the [judicial] assembly and the community" (Scott, *Proverbs*, 54), "Soon I was in dire trouble / Amidst the assembled congregation" (NJV), "I have come to the brink of utter ruin I in the midst of the whole assembly" (NIV), "Now I am at the point of utter ruin / in the public assembly" (NRSV). Like the NJV, NIV, and NRSV, my translation takes וְעֵדָה קָהָל as a single

- 5:15 Drink water from your own cistern;
running water from your own well.
- 5:16 Should your springs flow into the street,
[your] streams of water in the plazas?¹¹
- 5:17 They should be for you alone,
and not for strangers along with you.
- 5:18 May your fountain be blessed;
may you find joy in the wife of your youth -
- 5:19 a lovely doe, a graceful mountain goat.
May her breasts give you your fill at all times;
may you be intoxicated by her love continually.
- 5:20 Why, my son, should you be intoxicated by a strange woman?
[Why should] you embrace the bosom of a foreigner?
- 5:21 For a man's paths are before the eyes of Yahweh,
he observes all his tracks.
- 5:22 The offenses of the wicked will capture him,
the cords of his sin will lay hold of him.
- 5:23 He will die due to a lack of discipline,
he will stagger¹² because of his great folly.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

The proem בְּנִי ("my son") + the imperatives קִשָּׁב ("pay attention") and נָטָה ("incline") demarcate the beginning of a new lecture in 5:1. This proem introduces, in contrast to the diverse reminders of the previous lecture (4:20-27), a sustained warning about the strange woman (זֹרָה). Thus, formal (בְּנִי + general imperatives) and thematic (the strange woman) features create a clear beginning for this rhetorical unit.¹³

expression (hendiadys), namely, "public assembly" (so Whybray, *Proverbs*, 89).

¹¹ The context indicates that verse 16 is a rhetorical question, despite the absence of an interrogative pronoun or adverb (so most commentators, e.g., Toy, *Proverbs*, 111; McKane, *Proverbs*, 218, 318; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 89-90; see also, GKC 150a, NRSV, NIV).

¹² Or, "he will be intoxicated (יִשְׁגָּה)" (cf. שָׁגָה in vv. 19, 20).

¹³ Only Delitzsch (*Proverbs*, 105,122) argues that the discourse that began in 4:1 continues through 5:6, and that 5:7 begins a new lecture (5:7-23).

Formal and thematic features also establish 5:23 as the *terminus ad quem* of the lecture. In the next verse (6:1), a conditional clause introduces a new set of literary units that offer diverse instructions.¹⁴ Further, 6:1-20, despite the vocative בְּנִי (6:1 3), is not an instruction/lecture.¹⁵ Scholars concur, then, that this lecture extends no further than 5:23, and most agree that it includes all of verses 1-23.¹⁶

Some, however, dispute the integrity of the text. For example, Whybray claims that the original lecture consisted of 5:1-6, 8, and possibly part of 21-23, with the other verses the result of editorial expansion." The impetus for Whybray's delimitation is his perception of inexplicable shifts in content, style, language, and point of view in 5:1-23. According to Whybray, the father's original concern for the strange woman seducing the son is abandoned after verse 8 (except for a brief

¹⁴ 6:1-5, escaping the trap of surety; 6:6-11, the folly of laziness; 6:12-15, the character and downfall of the wicked; 6:16-19, six things the Lord hates.

¹⁵ The vocative בְּנִי (6:1) lacks any of the imperatives typically associated with the introductions of the lectures in Proverbs 1-9 (e.g., hear, pay attention, remember). Instead, in 6:1, בְּנִי introduces a conditional sentence that addresses the specific problem of surety. Thus, although 6:1-5 mimics aspects of the instructions of Prov 1-9 (namely, the vocative בְּנִי), it does not appear to be an instruction. Cf., McKane (*Proverbs*, 320) and Whybray (*Proverbs*, 93; although he admits that 6:1-5 "differs markedly" from other instructions in Prov 1-9). The other forms of 6:1-19 are clearly distinct from the instruction genre: 6:6-11 is a wisdom saying that draws an analogy from animal behavior, 6:12-15 is a character-sketch, and 6:16-19 is a numerical proverb. See Whybray, *Proverbs*, 93.

¹⁶ The lecture consists of 5:1-23, inclusive: Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 34; Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos*, 35-37; Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 59; Paul A. Kruger, "Promiscuity or Marriage Fidelity? A Note on Prov 5.15-18," *JNSL* 13 (1987): 61-68; Farmer, *Who Knows*, 41-43; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 66.

¹⁷ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 84. Others who redact portions of 5:1-23 include J.E. Goldingay ("Proverbs V and IX," *RB* 84 [1977]: 80-87; vv. 21-23 and 15-19 are later additions), Maier (*Die 'Fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*, 118; 15-19 is a later addition), and Scott (*Proverbs*, 51-52, 55, 57-58; 5:1-14 is the original instruction).

reference in v. 20). Verses 9-14 are not about seduction by an adulteress but about the fate of the adulterer, i.e., an unfaithful married man. Likewise, verses 15-20 address a married man and exhort him to marital fidelity. Finally, verses 21-23 offer a generic conclusion.¹⁸

Two objections may be raised against Whybray's proposal.¹⁹ First, Whybray's exegesis demands that all the lectures about the strange woman take an identical and inflexible form. He excises everything that is unique to any of these speeches as a later expansion. In my opinion, Whybray's treatment of Proverbs 5 offers a good example of Muilenburg's concern for exaggerations in the form critical method.²⁰ Whybray leaves no room for, in Muilenburg's terms, "fluidity, versatility, and if one may venture the term, artistry."²¹ Second, analysis that is sensitive to rhetoric will demonstrate that the supposed inexplicable shifts in theme, style, language, and point of view are not due to later expansions, but are integral elaborations of the rhetor's theme. This lecture is dominated by a single concern, namely, accepting the father's

¹⁸ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 84.

¹⁹ See the critiques of Whybray's redaction by Goldingay, "Proverbs V and IX," 84; and McKane, *Proverbs*, 279-80.

²⁰ E.g., Muilenburg ("Form Criticism," 5) observed that "there has been a proclivity among scholars in recent years to lay such stress upon the typical and representative that the individual, personal, and unique features of the particular pericope are all but lost to view." In Whybray's analysis, the "individual, personal, and unique features" have been excised as later additions.

²¹ Muilenburg, "Form Criticism," 7. In addition, McKane (*Proverbs*, 280) points out that "In so far as Whybray is guided by foreign models in carrying out this critical surgery, he claims for these a formal precision which they do not possess, for they, too, can be diffuse, and diffuseness in Proverbs 1-9 cannot be taken as a proof of additions to an original text of an Instruction."

wisdom regarding the danger of a sexual liaison with a strange woman. In order to convince the son to accept this counsel, the rhetor employs diverse images (e.g., water/drink, feet/steps) and devices (e.g., fictive speech, rhetorical questions). Nonetheless, these individual features work harmoniously to present a powerful argument for avoiding the strange woman. Consequently, my analysis takes 5:1-23, inclusive, as a complete lecture.

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

The rhetoric of 5:1-23 features two related artistic devices: 1) the use of diverse imagery (e.g., lips, feet, water, streets), and 2) the open-endedness of many of these figures. It appears that the images have been formulated in such a way that they permit numerous interpretations and, thus, are appropriate for numerous specific situations. For example, the specific identity of the strange/foreign woman (זָרָה, 5:3,20; נִכְרִיָּה, 5:20), is a notorious crux (see above, 18-20). In this lecture, three things about this woman seem clear. 1) The problem presented by the strange woman involves some type of sexual activity (5:19-20). 2) The strange woman stands over against the son's wife (5:8,15,18-20). Thus, the issue is not exogamous marriage, but promiscuity while married.²² 3) The argument set forth in verses 16-17 suggests that the strange woman is the wife of another man, although this is not certain (see below). Beyond these details, the identity of the foreign woman is ambiguous. She may be the

²² For arguments favoring the background of exogamous marriage see Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Social Context of the 'Outsider Woman' in Proverbs 1-9," *Bib* 72 (1991): 457-73. Against Blenkinsopp, see Brenner, "Proverbs 1-9: An F Voice?" 122-23.

wife of a fellow Israelite, the wife of a foreigner, or possibly an unmarried woman. In this lecture, the figure of the strange woman is sufficiently open-ended that she can represent any woman who poses a sexual threat to the married son.²³

a. Logos

As a warning against illicit behavior, this speech fits in the category of Western deliberative rhetoric; it endeavors to motivate the son to adopt a course of action. To this end, the logos of the lecture also corresponds to the traditional pattern of Western deliberative speech:

Proem - 5 :1 a
 Proposition - 5:1-7
 Proof - 5:8-20
 Epilogue - 5:21-23²⁴

Throughout the ten lectures, the vocative ("son") and its personal pronoun ("my") establish both an authoritative and personal mode of address, namely that of a

²³ So, Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 67. Some scholars contend that the sexual imagery of this lecture is a figure for another problem. For example, Van Leeuwen ("The Book of Proverbs," 66) argues that the strange woman is a figure for folly (see also, Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 155). Similarly, Farmer (*Who Knows*, 41-43) asserts that the real problem is the lure of foreign ways. While portions of the sexual imagery are amenable to interpretation as the lure of foreign ways or the love of folly, other portions seem to prohibit such a reading. For example, the pronouncement of blessing on the son's fountain (5:18-19) can hardly refer to anything other than his wife's sexuality. Elsewhere, the graphic and erotic images also seem to point to a problem with sexual discretion, not folly or foreign ways (so, Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom and Eros in Proverbs 1-9," *CBQ* 50 [1988]: 600-03).

²⁴ Compare to Nel's chiastic outline of this lecture (*The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs*, 61-62) and Farmer's division of the lecture into two halves (vv. 1-6 and vv. 8-23; *Who Knows*, 42).

teacher to his pupil.²⁵ Here, following the proem, the rhetor sets forth a proposition that includes three elements: 1) an initial statement of the proposal (5:1-2), 2) an initial argument for the proposal (5:3-6), and 3) a restatement of the proposal (5:7).

The initial statement of the proposal is almost identical to the proposals of the first subset of lectures (the calls to apprenticeship). The rhetor urges the son to "pay attention" (קשב) and "incline your ear" (נטה) to his wisdom and understanding (5:1; cf. 2:2, 4:1). Here, however, the rhetor expresses a specific purpose for accepting his teaching, namely, so the son will guard discretion and his "lips will protect knowledge" (5:2).²⁶ This is a slight, but significant, difference between the

²⁵ See above, 92-96. The fictional speech of the son (5:11-14) confirms an educational setting for this lecture. According to the rhetor, the son who rejects his wisdom will lament that he did not listen to "my teachers" or incline his ear to "my instructors" (5:13). Reference to the son's biological father is conspicuously absent in this lament.

²⁶ Some scholars consider the phrase "so that your lips will protect knowledge" (5:2b) to be corrupt because "'lips' do not 'keep knowledge' (e.g., Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 34). Thus, various emendations are offered: "that knowledge may preserve thee" (Toy, *Proverbs*, 101-02), "that thou mayest keep knowledge" (Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 34), "and let knowledge guard thy lips" (Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 47), "and the knowledge I speak may protect you" (Scott, *Proverbs*, 53), "and your lips ooze knowledge" (Mitchell Dahood, "Honey That Drips: Notes on Proverbs 5:2-3," *Bib* 54 [1973]: 65). Against these conjectural emendations, there is a close relationship between speech (i.e., lips, mouth, tongue) and knowledge in the Old Testament and especially Proverbs (e.g., Prov 17:27-28, 18:2, 20:15, 22:12). The sages acknowledged that speech can either spread or undo knowledge:

The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the minds of fools. (Prov 15:7 NRSV; see also, 15:2)

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

With their mouths the godless would destroy their neighbors,
but by knowledge the righteous are delivered. (Prov 11:9 NRSV)

The mouth may also ingest folly rather than knowledge:

propositions in the warnings about the strange woman (subset III) and the calls to apprenticeship (subset I). Here, unlike the calls to apprenticeship, the rhetor urges the son to accept and act upon the specific tenets of discretion and knowledge that he will articulate in the speech.

In contrast to lips that protect knowledge (5:2), the rhetor's initial argument warns the son about "the lips of the strange woman" that "drip honey" and her "mouth" that is "smoother than oil" (5:3). The imagery of lips/honey and mouth/oil may be read in three diverse, yet complementary, ways. 1) A mouth smoother (פֶּלֶק) than oil may be a figure for seductive speech (cf. 2:6, 7:5,21).²⁷ 2) Lips that drip honey may refer to sensual kisses (cf. Cant 4:11, 7:9).²⁸ 3) Van Leeuwen suggests that honeyed lips and a smooth mouth may "evoke the liquid delights and organs of love" (cf. the liquid sexual imagery of 5:15-19).²⁹ It is not necessary to select one of these readings over the others. Rather, the imagery is pliable enough to refer to various stages of seduction: words that flatter and seduce, kisses that further arouse the son, and finally, intercourse, the "liquid delights" of love.

The mind of one who has understanding seeks knowledge,
but the mouths of fools feed on folly. (Prov 15:14 NRSV)

Thus, "lips protecting knowledge" was a coherent concept in ancient Israel. Speech will either foster and spread knowledge, i.e., protect it (15:7, 14, 10:14), or destroy the potential benefits of knowledge (10:14, 11:9).

²⁷ Yee, "I Have Perfumed My Bed," 59.

²⁸ Scott, *Proverbs*, 54.

²⁹ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 66-67.

The rhetor acknowledges that the strange woman's seduction is sweet and smooth, but he immediately warns the son that the outcome of her seduction is "bitter like wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword" (5:4). Her mouth and lips may drip honey and be smoother than oil (5:3), but in the end her seduction will sour and cut the son.³⁰ The imagery of devastation continues: "Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of Sheol" (5:5). In Proverbs 1-9, the figure of feet/steps usually refers to a person's lifestyle, here, the strange woman's promiscuity. Perdue, however, regards "feet" (רגלים) and "steps" (צעדים) in verse 5 as euphemisms and translates: "Her sexual organs descend upon Mot, Her aroused vagina embraces Sheol."³¹ The presence of numerous sexual metaphors in 5:1-23 recommends Perdue's reading. At least, the image of "feet" and "steps" provides a double entendre. The lifestyle of the

³⁰ Carol A. Newsom ("Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 153) sees additional sexual imagery in the figure of cutting: "In patriarchal thinking it is woman's lack of the phallus and the privilege that the male associates with its possession that grounds woman's inferiority. In the father's phantasm the danger is that behind that reassuring smoothness, that visible absence of the phallus, there lurks something 'sharp as a two edged sword' (5:4). The fantasy is that she not only possesses a hidden super potency but that it is a castrating potency as well. She threatens to reverse the body symbolism on which the father's authority is established."

³¹ Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult: A Critical Analysis of the Views of Cult in the Wisdom Literatures of Israel and the Ancient Near East*, SBLDS, vol. 30 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 148. The euphemism "feet" (רגלים) for genitals is well attested in the Old Testament (e.g., II Kgs 18:27, Isa 7:20, Ezek 16:25). Perdue argues (233 n 54) that "steps" (צעדים) is also euphemistic on the basis of its parallelism to "feet" and the association of this term with the Ugaritic *sgd* ("to make an erection"). See also, Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 67.

strange woman not only leads to death, but the action of her feet/genitals (i.e., her steps/vagina) lays hold of Sheol.³²

The rhetor completes his initial warning-description of the strange woman with a summary indictment of her lifestyle. She not only embraces death (5:5), she pays no attention to the path that leads to life (5:6a). She is unstable, and unaware of her instability (5:6b). Thus, the rhetor concludes his initial argument for accepting his wisdom and avoiding the strange woman. She is a deadly, unsteady leader - a fool that only another fool would follow.

A restatement of the proposal brings the proposition to an end and provides a transition to the proof: "Now my son, listen to me; do not turn aside from the words of my mouth" (5:7).³³ Like the initial proposal of 5:1, the first imperative echoes the calls to apprenticeship (שָׁמַעַי, cf. 1:8, 4:1, 4:10).³⁴ However, unlike the calls to

³² The double entendre of feet/steps may resolve the supposed difficulty of "steps laying hold (תָּמַךְ) of death." For example, Oesterley (*Proverbs*, 35) writes, "Sheol as the abode of the departed cannot be grasped; it [תָּמַךְ] must mean 'attain' or 'reach' here" (so also, Toy, *Proverbs*, 101,104). If, however, steps/feet refer to sexual activity and the image of "laying hold of Sheol" is read as the hyperbolic result of her sexual activity, the philological problem is resolved. The actions of the strange woman's feet (lifestyle or sexual intercourse) not only lead to Sheol, but grasp it. See also, Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult*, 233, n 54.

³³ My classification of verse 7 as a restatement of the proposition that introduces the proof of the lecture runs against the consensus that verse 7 divides the discourse into two halves, each containing a similar warning (e.g., Farmer, *Who Knows*, 42). In my opinion, such a division of the lecture misses the way(s) in which verses 8-19 (the proof) elaborate the themes introduced in verses 3-6 (the proposition).

Despite the presence of בְּנִי plus the imperative שָׁמַעַי, verse 7 does not introduce a new lecture: 1) The rhetor uses וְעַתָּה to denote the continuation of the speech from verses 1-6. 2) Verses 7-23 do not introduce new themes, but elaborate the proposal of verses 3-6.

³⁴ The second imperative of 5:7 (אַל-תִּסּוּר) does not occur in the proposition of any other lecture in Proverbs 1-9. סוּר is present in the proofs of the second subset of lectures, i.e., lectures that articulate the teaching of the rhetor (3:7, 4:24, 27).

apprenticeship, this restatement leads directly into the explication of specific teaching that the son must obey.

The proof of the lecture advances the rhetor's argument for sexual discretion by asserting a negative imperative (stay away from the strange woman, 5:8) that is supported by a series of motive clauses (5:9-14), and then by asserting a positive imperative (stay with your wife, 5:15) that is supported by another series of motive clauses (5:16-19). To begin, the rhetor urges the son to stay far away from the strange woman ("Keep your path far away from her, do not go near the entrance of her house," 5:8). The entrance of her house may refer to her actual residence, a metaphorical threshold of no return,³⁵ or sexual intercourse.³⁶ As with the previous images, all three meanings of this figure are not only appropriate, but may denote various stages in the process of seduction.

In support of his admonition to steer clear of the woman, the father advises the son of what will happen to him if he disobeys. First, the son will give his "honor" (הוֹד) to others and his "years" (שָׁנָה) to a cruel one (אֶכְזָרִי; 5:9). Second, strangers (זָרִים) will devour the son's strength (כֹּחַ), and the son's toil (עֲצָב) will be consumed in the house of a foreigner (נִכְרִי; 5:10). The general meaning of these warnings is clear, namely, if the son rejects the father's wisdom and goes near the strange woman, he will forfeit his well-being. However, what the son specifically will forfeit and the person(s) to whom the son will give these assets is ambiguous. On the

³⁵ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 67-68.

³⁶ I.e., the door of her house is her vagina. See Van Leeuwen, *The Book of Proverbs*, 67.

one hand, scholars have proposed various identities for the persons mentioned in verses 9-10 (the others, the cruel one, the strangers, and the foreigner): death,³⁷ the husband or family of the strange woman,³⁸ Ishtar,³⁹ an Ishtar prostitute,⁴⁰ a blackmailer,⁴¹ an actual foreigner,⁴² sacred functionaries within a fertility cult,⁴³ the males to whom the woman belongs,⁴⁴ or the son's associates.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the items forfeited by the son (honor, years, strength, and toil) have been variously identified: the loss of social honor,⁴⁶ general financial ruin,⁴⁷ loss of property to non-

³⁷ The cruel one (5:9) = death; so Scott, *Proverbs*, 54.

³⁸ The others = the husband (or family of the woman); so Whybray, *Proverbs*, 88.

³⁹ The cruel one = Ishtar; Bostrom, *Proverbiastudien*, 137.

⁴⁰ The cruel one = a special class of Ishtar prostitute; so, possibly, McKane, *Proverbs*, 316.

⁴¹ The cruel one = blackmailer; so Kidner, *The Proverbs*, 70.

⁴² The house of a foreigner = a non-Israelite; so McKane, *Proverbs*, 316; Farmer, *Who Knows*, 42; Harold C. Washington, "The Strange Woman of Proverbs 1-9 and Post-Exilic Judean Society," *Second Temple Studies* 2 (1994): 240.

⁴³ Strangers = members of a fertility cult; so, possibly, Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult*, 148.

⁴⁴ All 4 terms = the males to whom the woman belongs; so Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 154.

⁴⁵ All 4 terms = the son's circle of associates; so Kidner, *Proverbs*, 70.

⁴⁶ Honor and years = dignity or honor; so, McKane, *Proverbs*, 316; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 67. Or, the loss of honor due to the loss of wealth; so Whybray, *Proverbs*, 87-88.

⁴⁷ Strength = wealth; so Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 36.

Israelites,⁴⁸ or children born to a non-Jewish mother.⁴⁹ There is no consensus on either the identity of the "others" or the specific things lost by the son.

As with previous imagery (e.g., lips [5:3], feet [5:5], entrance [5:8]), it seems best to regard the rhetoric of 5:9-10 as a general or multi-situational formulation rather than attempt to determine a single exclusive meaning. The rhetoric is pliable enough to fit numerous specific circumstances that may result from drawing near a strange woman. As Van Leeuwen points out, the open-endedness allows the son to apply the father's teaching to the specific circumstances of his own life.⁵⁰

A third set of consequences from drawing near the strange woman is articulated through the fictive future confession of the son (5:11-14). The rhetor claims that when the son reaches rock bottom ("when you are completely consumed," 5:11b), he will groan at his outcome (5:11a), confess how he hated discipline and scornfully rejected reprimand (5:12), and lament that he did not listen or incline his ear to his teachers (5:13). Key elements of the proposition (5:1-7) weave through this confession: your "outcome" (אֶת־הַיָּתָא; v. 11, cf. v. 4), "I did not listen (שָׁמַע)" (v. 13a, cf. v. 7), "I did not incline (נָטַה) my ear" (v. 13b, cf. v. 1). Significantly, the son's lament does not primarily concern his sexual exploits but how he rejected the proposition of this lecture, namely, he did not listen or incline his ear to his teacher's wisdom.

⁴⁸ Washington, "The Strange Woman of Proverbs 1-9," 240.

⁴⁹ Your toil in the house of a foreign man = the children conceived by the strange woman will belong to non-Israelites; so, Farmer, *Who Knows*, 42.

⁵⁰ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 68.

Everything else, i.e., his demise at the hands of the strange woman, is the result of this single failure.

Finally, the son will lament that he has come to the brink of total ruin in the public assembly (5:14). Again, the general meaning of the son's confession seems clear. According to the father, the son will eventually realize, too late, and confess his failures. However, the specific meaning of the son's final statement is subject to various interpretations. Does "the point of total ruin" refer to a death sentence for adultery,⁵¹ public scourging,⁵² denunciation by the woman's husband and demand for damages,⁵³ or simply public contempt and ostracism?⁵⁴ Each of these interpretations is defensible. Once again, the rhetoric is pliable enough to apply to numerous specific situations that the disobedient son will some day call "the point of total ruin."

In the second half of the proof, the rhetor balances the negative argument of 5:8-14 (stay away from the strange woman), with a positive argument (stay at home; 5:15-20). Water/drink imagery fills the text. Rather than drawing near the strange woman (5:8), the son should "drink water" from his own cistern, "running water from your own well" (5:15). The figure of water/drink is an erotic image.⁵⁵ Drinking from

⁵¹ Kidner, *Proverbs*, 70; although he admits that the death penalty was seldom, if ever enforced.

⁵² Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 37.

⁵³ McKane, *Proverbs*, 317.

⁵⁴ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 68.

⁵⁵ For example, in *Canticles*, the male describes his lover with water/drink imagery:
A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
a garden locked, a fountain sealed. . .

"your own cistern" denotes sexual intercourse with "your own wife," rather than with a strange woman.

The rhetor supports his appeal for exclusive "drinking" by posing a rhetorical question (5:16) and supplying the obvious response (5:17). Does the son want his "springs" to flow into the street or his "streams of water" to be exposed for public consumption (5:16)? The object of the figure has not changed from verse 15. The son's "springs" and "streams of water" still refer to the sexuality of his wife.⁵⁶ The question is whether the son would support the public consumption of his private springs. The answer, clearly, is no! No son would want others to share his wife. The rhetor confirms this response in the next verse: "They should be for you alone, and not for strangers along with you" (5:17). Thus, the rhetor advances an argument for

a garden fountain, a well of living water,
and flowing streams from Lebanon. (Cant 4:12,15)

⁵⁶ The shift from the singular "your own cistern" (מְבוֹרְךָ) and "your own well" (בְּאֵרְךָ) in verse 15 to the plural "your springs" (מַעְיָנֶיךָ) and "streams of water" (פְּלִגְיֹת מַיִם) in verse 16 has caused many scholars to claim that verse 16 does not refer to the son's wife, but the son. Consequently, the son's "springs" and "streams of water" have been variously identified as his seminal fluid (Bostrom, *Proverbiastudien*, 142; McKane, *Proverbs*, 318), progeny (Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 69), sources of pleasure (Toy, *Proverbs*, 113), unchaste women (Kruger, "Promiscuity or Marriage Fidelity?" 61-68), or a simple prohibition against unlawful intercourse with women (Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 37; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 90). Against these interpretations, both verse 15 and verse 17 refer to the sexuality of the son's wife, not the son (elsewhere the figure of water refers to the sexuality of the woman, not the man [Cant 4:12,15]). Further, verse 17 provides a response to the question in verse 16, namely, that the son's springs/water should be for his exclusive use, and not that of other men. Thus, if the rhetor's answer to his question takes "waters" as a metaphor for the son's wife, this strongly suggests that "waters" in his question also refers to the son's wife. The rhetor did not misunderstand his own question. The use of the plural in verses 16-17 rather than the singular (v. 15) is due to either the common plural use of "springs" and "channels of water" (e.g., "water," מַיִם is plural in Hebrew) and/or an intensification of the image (so Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 69), i.e., the wife's sexual "affairs," not "affair."

sexual discretion based on what is commonly called the “golden rule.”⁵⁷ If it is unthinkable for the son to share his wife with others, it should be unthinkable for the son to share another man's wife.

After admonishing the son to be sexually faithful to his spouse and arguing for this point on the principle of the golden rule, the rhetor pronounces blessings on the son's sexual fulfillment (5:18-19). Again, water/drink imagery dominates the rhetoric. First, the father blesses the son's "fountain," which is identified in the following parallel line as the son's wife (5:18). The purpose for blessing his fountain, i.e., his wife, is not for her sexual pleasure. Rather, she is blessed ("May your fountain be blessed," 5:18a), so that she adequately will satisfy the son's sexual desires ("may you find joy in the wife of your youth," 5:18b). The sexual pleasure of the woman is not under consideration, only the desires of the son. Second, the rhetor offers a wish that the son will be "filled" (or "saturated," *רֵוָה*) by his wife's breasts and, thus, intoxicated by her love (5:19).

This section of the proof concludes with more rhetorical questions (5:20). In view of the preceding blessing/wish for the son to be saturated and intoxicated by his wife's breasts (5:19), why should the son embrace and be intoxicated by the bosom of a strange woman (5:20)? According to the rhetor, there is no justifiable reason for such illicit activity. The breasts of the son's wife will give him his fill "at all times"

⁵⁷ The most famous formulation of the "golden rule" occurs in the Gospels: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt 7:12). Despite the fact that this formulation is much later than Proverbs 5, the same principle underlies the rhetoric of 5:16-17. The son should treat the wives of other men the way he wants those men to treat his wife.

(5:19b) and her love will intoxicate him "continually" (5:19c). Consequently, not only is drinking water from a "strange" well unacceptable on the principal of the golden rule (5:16-17), there is no legitimate reason for the son to seek sexual refreshment from any strange woman because his wife can and will fulfill his thirst (5:18-19).

The rhetor provides two final, clinching arguments for his proposition in the epilogue (5:21-23). First, he asserts a theological reason for sexual discretion. Yahweh sees everything that the son does (5:21). Consequently, any thought of a secret liaison with the strange woman is crushed. Second, the rhetor cautions the son that every sinful deed produces results that eventually destroy the sinner (5:22).⁵⁸ Thus, the son may be assured that any sexual indiscretion eventually will bring consequences, namely "staggering" (גִּגְשׁוֹ, or "intoxication," cf. 5:] . 9,20) and death (5:23). Significantly, however, the rhetor attributes the actual cause of the son's death, not to the strange woman, but to the antithesis of his own proposal. The son will die because of a lack of discipline and great folly (5:23). Against this, the rhetor has proposed that the son pay attention to wisdom (5:1) and not turn aside from the words

⁵⁸ The precise relationship between Yahweh's omni-vision in verse 21, and the act-consequence formulation in verse 22 is ambiguous. On the one hand, it is possible that here, Yahweh has nothing to do with the punishment of sin. The consequences of sin are natural or in-born, not due to Yahweh's direct intervention. On the other hand, Lennart Bostrom (*The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*, ConBOT, vol. 29 [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990], 99) cites this text as an example of how Yahweh observes human activity and holds people accountable for their deeds, i.e., Yahweh is the active agent of retribution. On the problem of act-consequence versus God's active retribution in Proverbs, see Gammie, "The Theology of Retribution in the Book of Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 32 (1970): 1-12; Bostrom, *The God of the Sages*, 90-140; and Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungdogma im Alten Testament," *ZTK* 52 (1955): 1-14.

of his mouth (5:7), which he later identifies as discipline (5:12). With this final warning and reference to the proposition, the lecture comes to a close.

b. Ethos

The rhetor's credibility, although of some concern, does not appear to be a major issue in this lecture. On the one hand, the rhetor addresses his audience from the position of a near-absolute authority and urges the acceptance of "my wisdom" and "my understanding." Throughout the lecture, he seems to expect the son to accept his testimony for no other reason than because it is his testimony. For example, there is no indication that his initial claims about the dangers of the strange woman rely on any authority other than his own (5:3-6). Similarly, the rhetor makes strong, self-reliant claims about what will happen to the son who ignores him (5:8-11) and what he will say (5:11-14).⁵⁹ Again, the rhetor supplies no evidence for these claims other than his own testimony. Presumably, then, he occupies a high position of respect. He expects the son to accept what he says on the grounds that he said it.

On the other hand, the rhetor does enhance his ethos in three ways. First, he addresses the son in the formal language of poetry. This device is common to all ten lectures. Here, however, the rhetor also demonstrates total command of metaphoric language and thus, presents himself as an even more masterful speaker.

⁵⁹ Van Leeuwen ("The Book of Proverbs," 68) observes that "The rhetorical strategy [of the fictive speech] is hypothetical and dangerous: How does the parent know what might be in the mind of a child, especially in relation to events that are only potential?" Van Leeuwen is correct, but does not acknowledge the ethos that necessarily stands behind such a fictive speech. There is no indication that the rhetor expected any response to the son's fictive speech other than agreement.

Second, the rhetor's invective against the strange woman not only destroys her credibility, but in the process establishes his own trustworthiness. While he denounces the woman, the rhetor presents himself as a possessor of wisdom and understanding (5:1; versus the woman who is unaware, 5:6), a speaker of true words (5:7; versus the flattery of the woman, 5:3-4) and one whose instruction can save the son (5:13-14; versus the deadly seduction of the woman, 5:3-5). Thus, the teacher stands out in vivid contrast to the strange woman as the only reliable, trustworthy source of information. Only his sage advice stands between the son and the insidious threat of the foreign woman.

Finally, in 5:21 the rhetor bolsters his argument and his ethos by referring to Yahweh: "a man's paths are before the eyes of Yahweh, he observes all his tracks." To be sure, throughout the proof of the lecture, the rhetor has argued for sexual discretion because it is the practical thing to do, not because it is the will of Yahweh. Thus, this single, late appeal to Yahweh is not at the heart of the argument. Nonetheless, this final claim presents the rhetor as a devotee of the community's theology and, therefore, a trustworthy speaker.

c. Pathos

The emotional dimension of this lecture is overwhelmingly negative. Apart from the pronouncement of blessing upon the son's wife, and thus his sexual pleasure (5:18-19), the pathos of fear dominates the speech. The son must accept the rhetor's teaching about sexual discretion or face dire consequences. If the son fails to listen and falls prey to the strange woman, he will face a bitter outcome (5:4a), a double-

edged sword (5:4b), and death (5:5). If he even goes near this woman he will give away his honor (5:9a), his life (5:9b), his wealth or strength (5:10a), and his "toil" (5:10b). Then, when he is "completely consumed" (5:11) and at "the point of total ruin" (5:14), he will groan in contrition (5:11). And finally, the son can be sure that his sins will destroy him because of the just order of the act-consequence relationship (5:22). He will stagger and die because of his failure to accept wisdom and discipline (5:23). Put simply, the rhetor attempts to frighten the son into submission by instilling in him an absolute terror of the strange woman.

4. Summary & Conclusions

This lecture is the first of three warnings about illicit sexual relations in Proverbs 1-9. In each of these lectures, the rhetorical problem is the potential improper fulfillment of the son's sexual desires. Here, in 5:1-23, the rhetor proposes that the son accept his teaching and warning about the incredible dangers of the strange woman (5:1-6). Throughout the lecture, multivalent imagery enables numerous applications of the rhetoric. Consequently, irregardless of the specific identity of the woman, or the specific outcome of the liaison, the rhetoric applies equally to all those contemplating or involved in illicit sexual relationships.

The proof of the lecture develops the topic of the dangerous woman in two complimentary ways. First, negatively, the son must not go near a strange woman (5:8). Second, positively, the son must find sexual fulfillment in his own wife (5:15). Various arguments, almost exclusively based on the pathos of fear and the ethos of the rhetor, are set forth to support these imperatives: the results of sexual indiscretion are

horrendous (5:9-14), sexual indiscretion violates the golden rule (5:16-17), and the son's wife has been blessed to satisfy his needs (5:18-19). The epilogue of the lecture supplies two additional arguments: 1) Yahweh sees everything (5:20), and 2) sin contains the seed of its own consequence (5:22-23).

The difference between this lecture and the first two subsets of lectures seems clear. First, unlike the calls to apprenticeship, the rhetor of 5:1-23 is not merely concerned that the son listen, but that the son accept and act upon his specific teaching regarding the strange woman. Second, unlike the calls to remember and obey, this lecture: 1) exhibits no concern for the son's memory (cf. 3:1, 3:21, 4:21), 2) does not consist of a series of terse imperatives + motive clauses (cf. 3:3-10, 3:23-31, 4:23-26), and 3) focuses on a single topic rather than diverse issues. Thus, 5:1-23 stands apart as the first member of a third subset, namely, warnings about illicit sexual relations.

Proverbs 6:20-35

1. Text and Translation

- 6:20 Guard, my son, the commandment of your father,
and do not disregard the teaching of your mother.
6:21 Bind them⁶⁰ upon your heart continually,

⁶⁰ The grammar in verses 21-22 is problematic. In 6:21, masculine plural pronominal suffixes refer to the feminine nouns **מִצְוֹת** and **תּוֹרָה** (v. 20). Although odd, Gesenius (GKC 135o) explains that such a "weakening in the distinction of gender," is not infrequent. See also Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 149.

In 6:22, in contrast to the masculine plural pronouns in 6:21, the rhetor uses feminine singular verbs (lit., "it" or "she" will lead you). Scholars account for this rather awkward shift in gender and number in various ways. Oesterley (*Proverbs*, 44) claims that verse 22 is an editorial insertion. Murphy (*Wisdom Literature*, 60) and Skehan ("Proverbs 5:15-19 and 6:20-24," *CBQ* 8 [1946]: 1-8) resolve the problem by moving 6:22 to a position after 5:19. Toy (*Proverbs*, 134-35) and Whybray (*Proverbs*, 103) propose that a line similar to 7:4a ("say to wisdom, you are my sister") has been omitted before 6:22. Thus, Whybray argues that the

- tie them around your neck.
- 6:22 When you walk they will lead you,
when you lie down they will watch over you,
and when you awake,⁶¹ they will attend⁶² you.
- 6:23 For commandment is a lamp and teaching is a light,
and the reprimands of discipline are the path of life.
- 6:24 In order to keep you from an evil woman,⁶³
from the smooth tongue of a foreign woman.
- 6:25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
do not let her capture you with her eyes.
- 6:26 For the price of a prostitute is a loaf of bread

addition of such a line would resolve the awkward shift to the feminine singular, account for the personification or semi-personification in verse 22, and account for the unusual three-line verse (adding a line would create two couplets instead of a tricola).

The precise cause of the awkward grammar in these verses is difficult to discern. A line may be missing or verse 22 may be a later editorial addition. Any resolution of this problem is necessarily conjectural due to the lack of any supporting textual evidence. Consequently, I tentatively maintain the MT and translate the pronouns of both v. 21 and 22 as "they" and "them," referring to "commandment" and "teaching" of verse 20 (so NRSV and NIV).

⁶¹ The finite verb (וַיִּקְצוּ) is governed by the preceding infinitives (בְּהִתְהַלֵּךְ and בְּשֹׁכְבְךָ); see GKC 114r.

⁶² תְּשִׁיחָךְ The verbal root שׁיח may be translated "to speak" (BDB 966-67; so NIV "they will speak to you," see also, NJV, NRSV) or "be concerned for, occupy one's attention" (KB 919). Although both translations are defensible, "attend to you" (i.e., be the object of concern) seems to fit the context of the preceding verbal ideas ("guide you" and "watch over you") better than "speak with you."

⁶³ The MT reads "evil woman" (מְאֵשֶׁת רָעָה). Many scholars (e.g., Scott, *Proverbs*, 61; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 80; see also, NRSV, NEB) adopt the LXX (ὑπόανδρου) and emend the pointing to רַעִי = from the wife of another. Others (e.g., Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 49) emend the MT רָע to זָרָה = strange woman (cf., 7:5). Against these emendations, Delitzsch (*Proverbs*, 151) and most English translations (e.g., RSV, NIV, NJV) maintain the MT.

The emended reading רַעִי may be correct (זָרָה is less likely because it lacks any textual support and requires the emendation of consonants). However, even if adopted, the rhetoric is only slightly altered. That this lecture warns against a married woman is made clear in verses 26, 29, and 34-35. Emendation of verse 24 to "wife of another" would only introduce this explicit identity earlier, rather than first describing her as evil. The other pejorative descriptions of the woman in verses 24-26 lead me to retain the MT רָע ("evil") as part of a larger rhetorical strategy to impugn the character of this woman (see below).

- but a married woman hunts with a greater appetite.⁶⁴
- 6:27 Can a man put fire in his bosom
and his clothes not be burned?
- 6:28 If a man walks on coals
will his feet not be scorched?
- 6:29 Just so the one who goes to his neighbor's wife;
no one who touches her will go unpunished.
- 6:30 People do not despise a thief who steals
in order to fill his appetite because he is hungry.
- 6:31 [Nonetheless] when he is discovered, he must repay sevenfold,
he will forfeit all the wealth of his house.
- 6:32 One who commits adultery with a woman lacks sense,
he destroys his own life.⁶⁵
- 6:33 He will discover affliction and dishonor,
his disgrace will not be blotted out.
- 6:34 For the man's anger will be passionate,⁶⁶
he will have no mercy on the day of vengeance.

⁶⁴ The key to my translation of verse 26 is recognizing that this verse makes a contrast between the price exacted by the prostitute and the price exacted by the married woman. Thus, 1) **כֶּצֶד** is best translated as "price" (e.g., "a prostitute's fee" [NRSV]; see G.R. Driver, "Problems and Solutions," VT 4 [1954]: 244; Scott, *Proverbs*, 61), not "to the point of" (e.g., "the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread" [NIV], or "the last loaf of bread will go for a harlot" [NJV]). 2) **נֶפֶשׁ** stands parallel to "a loaf of bread" and thus denotes "appetite" (so Scott, *Proverbs*, 61) rather than "life" (NIV, NRSV). 3) **רִקְרָה** (feminine of **רִקָּר**, "rare, costly, noble") modifies the married woman's appetite **נֶפֶשׁ**; cf. Thomas, "Textual and Philological Notes," 283, "man of weight"). She hunts (**תִּצְוֹד**) with a costly, i.e., more costly, appetite than the prostitute who only charges a loaf of bread. On moral objections to this translation, see n. 74.

⁶⁵ Literally, "destruction of his life he does/makes it/her" (**מַשְׁחִית נַפְשׁוֹ הָאֵל יַעֲשֶׂהָ**). Dahood (*Proverbs and Northwest Semitic Philology*, 13-14) appeals to Ugaritic usage of the root **עשה** and translates this phrase: "But a destroyer of his own soul is he who violates her" (so also, Scott, *Proverbs*, 62). Similarly, Kopf ("Arabische Etymologien und Parallelen Zum Bibelwörterbuch," VT 9 [1959]: 270) associates the Hebrew root **עשה** with the Arabic *gasy* ("to cover") and translates "einer Frau beiwohnen" (lies with a woman). Against these conjectures, the standard meaning of **עשה** ("to make, do") makes good sense: "he makes destruction of his own life" (see McKane, *Proverbs*, 330-31).

⁶⁶ **קִנְאָה** may denote passion or jealousy (KB 843, BDB 888). Thus, verse 34a may be translated as either "the man's anger will be passionate" (NJV), or "jealousy arouses a husband's fury" (NRSV, see also, NIV, Scott, *Proverbs*, 62; and G.R. Driver, "Problems in the Hebrew Text of Proverbs," 177).

6:35 He will not relent for any [amount of] ransom,
he will not accept it even though you multiply the bribe.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

Form critical analysis establishes 6:20 and 35 as the outer limits of this speech. In contrast to the diverse genres of 6:6-19,⁶⁷ 6:20-35 is an instruction/lecture. The initial verse of this unit (6:20) utilizes the customary introductory formula for the lectures, namely, the vocative בְּנִי + general imperatives ("guard" [נָצַר] and "do not disregard" [נָטַשׁ]). Also, in contrast to the preceding literary units, 6:20-25 introduces a sustained warning about the "evil" (רָעָה) or "foreign" (נִכְרִיָּה) woman. Finally, the beginning of the tenth lecture in 7:1 establishes 6:35 as the terminus ad quem of this speech (see my analysis of 7:1-27). Thus, both formal and thematic features demarcate the beginning (6:20) and end (6:35) of this rhetorical unit.

Scholars generally accept 6:20 and 35 as the boundaries for this lecture, and most agree that the lecture includes all of verses 20-35.⁶⁸ This speech is dominated by

⁶⁷ 6:6-11 is a wisdom saying that draws an analogy from animal behavior (be diligent like the ant), 6:12-15 is a character-sketch (the character and demise of the wicked), and 6:16-19 is a numerical saying (six things that the Lord hates). See Whybray, *Proverbs*, 93.

⁶⁸ So Toy, *Proverbs*, 132; Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 149-55; Kidner, *Proverbs*, 73; McKane, *Proverbs*, 326-29; Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 60; Farmer, *Who Knows*, 46-47; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 79-81.

Some scholars, however, do question the integrity of this lecture. For example, Whybray (*Proverbs*, 102) argues that 6:20-35 contains vocabulary, expressions, and rhetorical devices that are unique to the ten lectures, and therefore secondary to this lecture. Further, he argues that there is an inexplicable shift from second person address (vv. 20-25) to third person description (vv. 26-35a). On the basis of this evidence, Whybray claims that the original lecture consisted of verses 20-22, 24-25, and perhaps verse 32. The same objections I raised earlier against Whybray's redaction of 5:1-23 are applicable to his hypothesis regarding 6:20-35 (see above, 216-218). See also, the similar, although less radical redactional hypotheses of Bostrom (*Proverbiastudien*, 143f. [critiqued by McKane, *Proverbs*, 328-29]),

a single rhetorical problem, namely, the danger of sexual relations with a married woman. To resolve this problem, the rhetor directly addresses the son (vv. 20-25, 35) and utilizes third person descriptions (vv. 26-34). The rhetor also employs various rhetorical devices, including some that are unique to this lecture (e.g., an *a fortiori* argument, v. 30). These diverse features, however, do not denote editorial expansions, but work together to present a powerful, unified argument.

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

This lecture (6:20-35) is clearly similar to the preceding speech about the strange woman (5:1-23). Nonetheless, while 5:1-23 and 6:20-35 share features that distinguish them from the calls to apprenticeship and the calls to remember and obey, the rhetoric of these two lectures is not identical. For example, 6:20-35 is more direct and less ambiguous than the open-ended metaphors in the rhetoric of 5:1-23. To be sure, euphemisms continue in 6:20-35, but they are fewer in number, less vivid (e.g., "touches her" [6:29], cf. the liquid imagery for intercourse in 5:1-23), and placed side by side with direct speech (e.g., "the price of a prostitute" [6:26], "one who commits adultery" [6:32]). Thus, like the other subsets, the warnings against illicit sexual liaisons possess common features that distinguish them as a group, and unique features that differentiate them from one another.

and Oesterley (*Proverbs*, 44-47).

a. Logos

The aim of this lecture is to convince the son to accept the rhetor's teaching and avoid sexual contact with the evil woman. In rhetorical terms, this objective is a matter of expediency, i.e., what is best in a given situation, the typical concern of deliberative rhetoric. Further, this lecture also follows the customary arrangement of Western deliberative speech.

Proem - 6:20a

Proposition - 6:20-25

Proof - 6:26-31

Epilogue - 6:32-35

The rhetor addresses his audience as "my son" (בְּנִי, 6:20), the same proem used in all ten lectures (with the exception of 4:1, "oh sons" [בְּנִים]). Here, however, aspects of the proposal combine with this proem to reintroduce questions regarding the specific relationship denoted by בְּנִי. After addressing his audience as "my son," the rhetor urges him to guard "the commandment of your father" and not to "disregard (נִטֵּשׁ) the teaching (תּוֹרָה) of your mother" (6:20). This statement is very similar to the beginning of the first lecture: "Listen, my son, to the instruction of your father and do not disregard (נִטֵּשׁ) the teaching (תּוֹרָה) of your mother" (1:8). Consequently, both texts (6:20 and 1:8) raise the same question, namely, what is the relationship between the rhetor and his audience? Does בְּנִי denote a kinship or scholastic relation?

I have already discussed the meaning of בְּנִי in my analysis of 1:8. Because

1:8 and 6:20 are so similar, the arguments regarding בְּנִי in 6:20 are identical to those in 1:8 and need not be rehearsed here (see above, pp. 92-96). My own conclusion

mediates between the extremes of interpretation, namely, that the vocative **בְּנִי** indicates a formal school setting devoid of familial influence or that **בְּנִי** indicates only a biological relationship. The rhetorical situation of 6:20-35, like 1:8-19 and all the lectures, is the address of a teacher/sage to his student(s). However, within this situation, the rhetor envisions his role as an extension or continuation of familial education. He speaks from a position supported by parental authority and, thus, speaks for both the father and mother.

The proposition of the lecture includes three elements. First, the rhetor appeals to the son to accept parental and, thus, his own teaching (v. 20). Instead of disregarding the authority of his parents/teacher, the son must fully embrace their teaching by binding it on his heart and tying it around his neck (v. 21; cf. 3:3).

Second, the rhetor enumerates the benefits of accepting his teaching through a series of images (vv. 22-23). 1) He personifies **מִצְוַת** (commandment) and **תּוֹרַת** (teaching) as a confidant or guardian. In every aspect of his life (walking, lying down, waking up - a merism for all of life), **מִצְוַת** and **תּוֹרַת** will lead, watch over, and attend the faithful son (v. 22).⁶⁹ 2) The rhetor claims that his teaching is a lamp and a light (v. 23a). His teaching provides an ability to see clearly and dispel the dangers associated with darkness (e.g., stumbling and falling; cf. 4:18-19).⁷⁰ 3) The rhetor

⁶⁹ On the apotropaic imagery of verse 22, see Patrick D. Miller, Jr, "Apotropaic Imagery in Proverbs 6:20-22," *JNES* 29 (1970): 129-30.

⁷⁰ Vermes ("The Torah as Light," *VT* 8 [1958]: 437) suggests that the images of lamp and light refer to the truth quality or divine revelation of the rhetor's teaching. Certainly, the rhetor would claim that his teaching is true. Here, however, these images seem to set forth the benefits of receiving his teaching rather than asserting its truth quality.

asserts that the reprimands of discipline are the path of life (v. 23b). Thus, the temporary unpleasantness of discipline (תּוֹכַחַת) must not be avoided, but accepted as the way to acquire genuine life.

Third, the rhetor introduces the specific topic for this lecture. The purpose of this speech is to keep the son away from the evil woman (6:24a). Immediately, the rhetor lists her seductive arsenal: 1) her words ("the smooth tongue of a foreign woman," 6:24), 2) her beauty ("do not desire her beauty in your heart," 6:25a), and 3) her actions ("do not let her capture you with her eyes," 6:25b). The son must not be swayed by this woman's rhetoric, looks, or gestures. He must not even take the slightest step toward such a woman ("Do not desire her beauty in your heart," 6:25a). Who is the evil, foreign woman of Proverbs 6:20-35? When one looks ahead in the lecture, the identity of this woman seems clear.

1. She is a "married woman," and not a prostitute (6:26).
2. She is the "neighbor's wife" (6:29).
3. Her husband will exact vengeance on the son, i.e., again, she is a married woman (6:34-35).

Thus, the specific rhetorical problem underlying this lecture appears to be adultery, which is a more specific issue than the general warning against illicit sexual relations in 5:1-23.⁷¹ The ethnicity of the woman does not seem to be an issue.⁷² Rather, the designation "foreign" (נִכְרִיָּה) is a pejorative description of this woman's status

⁷¹ The open-ended identification of the strange woman in 5:1-23 includes the problem of adultery, as well as many other types of illicit sexual relations. Here, however, the problem is limited to adultery.

⁷² See Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 154.

(cf., the parallel term "evil," 6:24). She is one who acts outside the communal norms and threatens the well-being of the community, i.e., she is an outsider.⁷³

Convincing the son to accept the rhetor's proposal to avoid the evil, foreign woman is the task of the proof (6:26-31). To this end, the proof advances two arguments against sexual liaisons with a married woman. First, the rhetor warns of the high cost of adultery: "For the price of a prostitute is a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts with a greater appetite" (6:26). The point of the comparison is not to condone prostitution, but to assert the higher price exacted by adultery.⁷⁴ A prostitute costs a loaf of bread, but a married woman will exact a much heavier toll on the son. However, in a deft rhetorical move, the rhetor does not specify anything more about the married woman's "greater appetite." This threat is left hauntingly open-ended, and thus becomes more ominous. Somehow, somehow, the married woman will hunt down (תִּצְוֶה, 6:26e) the son who sleeps with her.

⁷³ Or perhaps, in a Mediterranean honor and shame social system, the foreign woman is shameless. See above, pp. 129-130.

⁷⁴ Kidner (*Proverbs*, 74) objects to any translation that renders verse 26 as a comparison between prostitution and adultery. He argues that such a translation shrugs off prostitution "in a manner which is hardly true to the material facts, or to the moral standpoint of the book." Kidner's objection is understandable. Prostitution is not condoned in Proverbs or the Old Testament. However, it must be admitted that the attitude in the Old Testament towards prostitution is ambivalent. Although outlawed (Lev 19:29, Deut 23:18), the practice seems to have been tolerated, with men incurring little or no punishment for such activity (Gen 38, Judg 16:1-3; see M. Davies, "On Prostitution," in *The Bible and Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson*, JOSTSup 200, M. Daniel Carrol R., David J.A. Clines, and Philip R. Davies, eds. [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 225-31; and Elaine Adler Goodfriend, "Prostitution: The Prostitute in the OT," in *ABD*, David Noel Freedman, ed. [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 505-07).

The second argument of the proof stresses the certainty of paying the cost of adultery. Two rhetorical questions warn the son that payment cannot be avoided. To begin, the rhetor asks, "Can a man put fire in his bosom⁷⁵ and his clothes not be burned?" (6:27). The obvious answer is no. Next, he asks, "If a man walks on coals will his feet not be scorched?" (6:28). Yes, of course his feet will be scorched.⁷⁶ Certain actions, because of their very nature, cause certain results. The rhetor draws his conclusion: "Just so the one who goes to his neighbor's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished" (6:29).⁷⁷ Again, while the punishment itself is left undefined, the crux of the argument is clear: No one can avoid paying the cost for adulterous actions. Adultery, because of its nature, produces unavoidable consequences.

Both arguments, the high cost of adultery and the certainty of paying in full, are brought together in the conclusion of the proof (6:30-31). Here, the rhetor employs an a fortiori argument. Although people do not despise a thief who steals because he is hungry, nonetheless, when he is caught he will pay to the fullest extent

⁷⁵ Bosom" (בֶּטֶן), here, most likely refers to the fold of the garment above the belt. A person cannot put fire into the fold of their garment and not burn their clothes. So Toy, *Proverbs*, 138.

⁷⁶ Because of the sexual content of this lecture and the frequent euphemistic use of "feet" (רַגְלַיִם) to denote genitals in the Hebrew Bible (see above, n. 31), this warning that the son will scorch his "feet" may be a double entendre. Not only do those who walk on coals scorch their (literal) feet, those who commit adultery scorch their genitals/feet.

⁷⁷ In this sexual context, "goes to" (הִתְּבָּא אֵלַי) and "touches her" (כָּל-הַנִּגַּע בָּהּ) are euphemisms for sexual intercourse (see Gen 20:4, 38:8, 2 Sam 11:4; so Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 153; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 47; Maier, *Die fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*, 146).

of the law, and beyond (6:30-31).⁷⁸ He will forfeit all his wealth because of his illicit actions (6:31b). The implication is that if this is what happens to a pitied thief, how much more certain and worse will the consequences be for a man who has sex with another man's wife, an adulterer who is not pitied.

Thus far, the son has been warned that adultery will exact a tremendous toll and that anyone who commits adultery will certainly pay the entire price. The epilogue begins with a summary conclusion. After hearing this warning, if the son

⁷⁸ There are several apparent difficulties in the rhetoric of verses 30-31. First, the rhetor's claim that the thief will repay "sevenfold" (6:31) conflicts with the Mosaic law. According to Exodus 22:1-8, the penalty for theft was 2x, 4x, or 5x, but never 7x. Scholars have offered various explanations for this enigma, e.g., 7x is a figure of speech (Kidner, *Proverbs*, 74), or a very large sum (Toy, *Proverbs*, 140; Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 154). In my opinion, assuming that the rhetor (and son) was familiar with lesser laws of restitution, his exaggeration of a "sevenfold" repayment fits well in the rhetoric. Despite societal empathy for the plight of the hungry thief, when he is caught he must pay to the fullest extent of the law - and beyond, i.e., sevenfold! How much more severe and certain is the cost of adultery.

Second, many scholars translate verse 30 as a question, "Is not a thief despised if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry?" (e.g., McKane, *Proverbs*, 220,330; Toy, *Proverbs*, 139-40; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 48). The motivation for this rendering is the supposedly problematic ethic that arises in reading the verse as a simple statement: "People do not despise a thief who steals in order to fill his appetite because he is hungry." According to Oesterley, such teaching is "not in accordance with O.T. teaching."

Certainly, theft is not approved of in Proverbs or the Old Testament. However, three observations stand against translating verse 30 as a question. 1) The Hebrew does not include an interrogative particle or any other indicator that this verse is to be read as a question. 2) Even when read as a statement, verses 30-31 do not justify theft, but assert that even a thief who is pitied will pay to the fullest extent of the law - and beyond. 3) The key to understanding verses 30-31 is recognizing the position and function of these verses in the rhetoric. These verses stand at the end of the proof and bring together the two previous lines of argumentation (the high cost of adultery and the certainty of payment). The rhetor combines both ideas in a comparison to the pitied thief. If a pitied thief must pay (certainty of payment), and must pay sevenfold (high cost), the despised adulterer cannot expect to fare any better.

Third, numerous interpreters see a discrepancy between the supposed poverty of the thief (v. 30) and the "wealth of his house" (v. 31; e.g., Toy, *Proverbs*, 139; Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 48; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 108). Against this objection, the point of the rhetoric is that the thief will pay, despite his poverty. His inability to repay "sevenfold" will result in the forfeiture of whatever wealth he does possess. Neither pity, nor poverty will exempt him from payment.

commits adultery, he is a fool who has no one to blame for his destruction but himself (6:32). Previously, the rhetor has repeatedly warned the son of such destruction, i.e., the high cost of adultery, but has not explicated any details (6:26, 29, 31). Now, finally, the rhetor specifies some of the costs and how these costs will be exacted from the son. First, he will suffer physical affliction (עֲנִי, 6:33a) and social dishonor (קִלְיוֹן, 6:33a) that he will be unable to overcome (6:33b).⁷⁹ Second, these consequences will come about due to the anger of the woman's husband: "his disgrace will not be blotted out, for (כִּי, "because") the man's anger will be passionate" (6:33b-34a). The offended husband will control the son's fate, and so, in an effort to motivate the son to avoid the married woman, the rhetor stresses that this man will be furious (6:34a). He will have no mercy (6:34b), nor will the son be able to pay him off no matter how much he offers (6:35). With this final warning, and a return to second person address ("he will not accept it even though you multiply the bribe," 6:35b), the lecture ends.

⁷⁹ On the basis of laws in Deuteronomy 22:22-24 and Leviticus 20:10, some interpreters suggest that 6:33-34 is threatening a death penalty (e.g., Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 154-55; Kidner, *Proverbs*, 74). Against this understanding, although the law of Moses dictated capital punishment for adultery, the scenario envisioned by this rhetor is not following the law of Moses. For example, in Deuteronomy and Leviticus the offended husband plays no role in the punishment, nor is the payment of a ransom a possibility. But here, in 6:34-35, the fate of the man is in the hands of the offended husband, who at least has the option of accepting or rejecting payment. Further, the husband's role is not a matter of personal revenge (so Maier, *Die fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*, 153), but part of a legally sanctioned process (on the legal nature of the phrase "day of vengeance" and the husband's role, see H.G.L. Peels, "Passion or Justice? The Interpretation of B'eyom Naqam in Proverbs 6:34," *VT* 44 [1994]: 270-74). Thus, Mosaic legislation is not a reliable guide for understanding the threats in this speech.

b. Ethos

The development of the rhetor's ethos in this speech is unclear. On the one hand, illicit sexual liaisons with a married woman are condemned on wholly pragmatic grounds, without any mention of God. The son must avoid the married woman, not because of God, but because of the disastrous and certain consequences of such an action. So, it seems that the rhetor has little concern to bolster his credibility or his argument. On the other hand, portions of the rhetor's condemnation of adultery have strong resemblance to texts from Deuteronomy and, thus, may suggest that the rhetor fortified his ethos by making an indirect appeal to the community's religious traditions. Compare, for example:

Prov 6:20-22 Guard, my son, the commandment of your father,
and do not disregard the teaching of your mother.
Bind (קשר) them upon your heart (לב) continually,
tie (ענד) them around your neck.
When you walk (הלך) they will lead you,
when you lie down (שכב) they will watch over you,
and when you awake (קץ), they will attend you.

Deut 11:18-19 You shall put these words of mine in your heart (לב) and soul,
and you shall bind (קשר) them as a sign on your hand, and fix
them as an emblem on your forehead. Teach them to your
children, talking about them when you are at home and when
you are away (הלך), when you lie down (שכב) and when you
rise (קום). (NRSV; see also, Deut 6:6-9)

Prov 6:25 Do not desire (חמד) her beauty in your heart
do not let her capture you with her eyes.

Deut 5:21a Neither shall you covet (חמד) your neighbor's wife. (NRSV)⁸⁰

⁸⁰ For a complete discussion of the similarities between Proverbs 6 and Deuteronomy see Robert, "Les Attachés Littéraires Bibliques de Prov. I-IX," 47, 51, 53-56, 59; and Maier, *Die fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*, 153-66.

In addition to possible allusions to Deuteronomy that would increase the rhetor's ethos, scholars also have recognized possible links between Proverbs 6 and the book of Psalms. For example:

Prov 6:23 For commandment is a lamp (נֹר) and teaching is a light (אֹר),
and the reprimands of discipline are the path (דֶּרֶךְ) of life.

Ps 119:105 Your word is a lamp (נֹר) to my feet
and a light (אֹר) to my path (נִתְּיָב). (NRSV)

Most scholars conclude that the resemblances between Proverbs 6 and these texts, especially Deuteronomy, are too strong to be explained by coincidence.⁸¹

Instead, they argue that this similarity denotes that Proverbs made use of earlier texts. If accepted, this hypothesis has significance for understanding the development of rhetor's ethos. Van Leeuwen explains,

Thus underlying parental authority in Prov 6:20-35 is an implicit appeal to the divine law given through Moses . . . In sum, the highly allusive language of 6:20-35 connects its parental wisdom to the Mosaic law (torah), which is also Israel's "wisdom" (Deut 4:5-8). Parental authority always had a norm above and beyond itself, to which it must appeal and to which it is accountable. For Proverbs that norm may be cosmic wisdom or, in this case, the "law" of Moses.⁸²

In other words, according to Van Leeuwen, the rhetor establishes his argument and his credibility by alluding to the Mosaic law. Thus, he presents his teaching about the

⁸¹ E.g., McKane, *Proverbs*, 326-27; Farmer, *Who Knows*, 46; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 80.

⁸² Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 80.

dangers of adultery not as his own, but as the accepted religious tradition of the community.⁸³

Although persuasive, it is necessary to raise a few caveats against this consensus. First, while Proverbs 6 is similar to Deuteronomy, the specific instructions of Proverbs 6 differ from the Mosaic law in two respects: 1) the restitution that must be repaid by the thief (seven times in Prov 6:31; no more than five times in Mosaic legislation, see above), and 2) the punishment for adultery and the role of the offended husband (affliction and dishonor inflicted by the offended husband in Prov 6:33-35; death without the husband's involvement in Deut 22:22). These inconsistencies may be variously explained (see above), but the ambivalence remains.

Second, Oesterley has pointed out that portions of Proverbs 6 are quite similar to Ahikar.⁸⁴ Compare, for example:

Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
do not let her capture you with her eyes. (Prov 6:25)

My son, go not after the beauty of a woman,
and lust not after her in thine heart. (Ahikar ii.19)

⁸³ Maier (*Die fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*, 162) draws a similar conclusion: "Aufgrund der genannten Beobachtungen stellt Prov 6,25-35 eine aktualisierende Auslegung der genannten Dekaloggebote dar. Sie bestatigt unter Zuhilfenahme der Verbote von Diebstahl and Begehren das apodiktische Verbot des Ehebruchs fur den Alltag, indem die schlimmen Folgen and die Unausweichlichkeit der Strafe aufgezeigt werden. Die Verbindung dieser Auslegung von Dekaloggeboten mit dem Gebot der Kinderunterweisung im Schma Jisrael verleiht der in Prov 6 geausserten Lehre eine hohe Autoritat."

⁸⁴ Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 46.

Similarly, Toy attributes the ideas of 6:30-35 to Canticles.⁸⁵ Of course, this does not negate the hypothesis of literary dependence on Deuteronomy or Psalms. It does, however, suggest that the source of the ideas and language of Proverbs 6 may be more diffuse than generally assumed.

Third, as Whybray points out, while scholars generally agree that there is some connection between Proverbs 6 and Deuteronomy, there is no agreement about the direction of influence.⁸⁶ For example, against Van Leeuwen, *et al.*, Weinfeld claims that "in order to strengthen the Israelite loyalty to the covenant the author of Deuteronomy not only relied on covenant typology but also employed modes of expression and imagery taken from the sapiential sphere."⁸⁷ Weinfeld cites Proverbs 6:20-22 as a specific example of such didactic influence on Deuteronomy 6:7-8.⁸⁸ Consequently, because of these conflicting claims and the difficulty of dating the texts, Whybray is hesitant to assign priority to either Proverbs or Deuteronomy. Instead, he says that "One may perhaps cautiously speak of a convergence of wisdom and Deuteronomistic teaching at this point."⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Toy, *Proverbs*, 153 (compare Prov 6:31b to Cant 8:7b, Prov 6:34a to Cant 8:6a).

⁸⁶ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 103.

⁸⁷ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 298.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 299-302. In a similar thesis, Deissler dates the composition of Psalm 119 after Proverbs 6 and argues that Psalm 119:105 refers to Proverbs 6:23. Compare to Maier, *Die fremde Frau' in Proverbien 1-9*, 156.

⁸⁹ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 103.

We are left, then, with a mixed development of ethos in 6:20-35. In addition to the use of formal language (poetry) and the vocative **יְיָ** that establishes or reminds the audience of the speaker's authoritative position, the speaker may have made use of earlier biblical (e.g., Deuteronomy 6), and perhaps even non-biblical material (e.g., *Ahikar*). As Van Leeuwen and Maier argue, this use of earlier traditions would have helped establish the authority of the rhetor. However, this being the case, why does the rhetor not explicitly mention God? Moreover, why does the rhetor's warning not follow the letter of the law to which he alludes, namely, death for adultery? In the first case, perhaps the artful use of traditions associated with Yahweh rendered explicit reference to Yahweh superfluous. Yahweh, through his law, stands fully behind the rhetor and his warning. In the second case, apparently, the social setting of the lecture did not support capital punishment for adultery. Consequently, the rhetor's use of earlier traditions is selective. Like all effective rhetors, he uses only what is helpful for building his argument.

c. Pathos

This lecture is neither subtle nor reserved in its use of emotional arguments. Virtually every line evokes some type of emotional response, from the positive reference to parental teaching (v. 20), to the fierce anger of the offended husband (v. 35). Careful analysis of these emotional ploys reveals a sharp and consistent distinction between the types of pathetic arguments the rhetor uses to solicit general acceptance of his teaching (6:20-23) and the pathetic arguments he uses to motivate the son to avoid adultery (6:24-35).

Positive emotional arguments support the admonitions to accept the rhetor's teaching. If the son will whole-heartedly accept this teaching, he will find it to be a reliable guide for the complexities of life, a protector for the insecurities of life, and a constant companion to attend him throughout life (6:22). Teaching (תּוֹרָה) is a light, and the father's commandments are a lamp for the son's well-being (6:23). In addition, the reprimands of discipline that the rhetor provides are the path of life itself (6:24). Each of these promises or claims is based on the positive pathos of pleasure or hope. Genuine life may be obtained, the rhetor argues, by accepting his teaching.

In contrast to the positive pathos of the opening verses, the rhetor's warning against the foreign woman exclusively and extensively employs the emotion of fear. His initial description of this woman depicts her as one who is out to do nothing less than capture and prey upon the son. She is evil and foreign (6:24). Her speech and actions are seductive (6:24b, 25b) and she "hunts" (חָיָה) for her keep (6:26b). She may be beautiful (6:25), but the rhetor's description of her is designed to strike a chord of fear in the son. She not only hunts for prey, but she hunts with a "greater appetite" than a prostitute (6:26). Further, no one who approaches her will be able to escape punishment. This dual fear, namely, the high cost of adultery and the certainty of punishment, is heightened even further by ambiguity. What will happen to the son and how it will happen is not explicated in the proof, but left hauntingly and ominously open-ended. Not until the epilogue does the rhetor begin to explain the unavoidable consequences of adultery, and even here the matter is not resolved. Adultery will cause the son to destroy his own life (6:32); more specifically, he will

experience both physical and social tragedy (6:33). However, neither of these punishments is explicated in any detail. The rhetor does identify the source of this destruction and, in so doing, adds another reason for the son to be afraid. The offended husband will be furiously angry (6:34), so angry that he will not consider any reasonable settlement of differences (6:35).

The extensive development of the pathos of fear in 6:24-35 is a clear attempt to frighten the son into obedience. This strategy is oriented entirely to the son's desire for self-preservation or honor, if an honor-shame social system provides the background of Proverbs 1-9 (see above, pp. 129-130). The rhetor does not evoke fear or concern for what might happen to the woman, her family, the son's wife, his family, or the community as a whole. Rather, the speaker engages the son on the level of his own self-interest.⁹⁰ Hopefully, for the rhetor, one or more of his arguments will alarm or frighten the son enough to motivate him to stay away from the evil woman.

4. Summary & Conclusions

The rhetorical situation of 6:20-35 is an educational setting in which the teacher speaks on behalf of the student's parents. Thus, while the teacher encourages the son to accept parental teaching (6:20), it is the rhetor/teacher who speaks (6:21-35). Within this setting, the rhetorical problem that prompts this lecture is the threat (potential or real) of a married woman seducing the son. In response, the rhetor sets forth a straightforward proposition, namely, that the son must avoid the lure of the evil

⁹⁰ Toy, *Proverbs*, 137-38.

woman (6:24-25). This proposal is supported by two complementary arguments in the proof: 1) the high cost of adultery, and 2) the certain payment for adultery. Each topic is introduced separately (6:26, 27-29) and then brought together in an a fortiori argument; if the pitied thief must repay sevenfold, how much more severe and certain will be the punishment of the adulterer (6:30-31). The epilogue draws a conclusion based on the proof (the adulterer lacks sense and destroys himself, 6:32) and issues a final passionate argument (the adulterer will suffer affliction and dishonor because of the wrath of the offended husband, 6:33-35). Throughout the lecture, the rhetor bolsters his argument (and his credibility) with apparent allusions to earlier texts (especially Deuteronomy) and overtly plays upon the emotions of his audience. In this lecture, then, the rhetor makes full use of all three artistic means (logos, pathos, and ethos) for persuading the son to stay away from a married woman.

In comparison to the other lectures in Proverbs 1-9, both the form and topic of 6:20-35 disassociate it from the lectures of subsets I and II, while the same features link this speech with that in 5:1-23. In general, both 5:1-23 and 6:20-35 address sexual temptations facing the son. More specifically, both identify the temptation as a foreign woman (נָכַר יָדָה; 5:20, 6:24),⁹¹ both express concern for the woman's seductive speech (5:3, 6:24), both threaten social ruin and death (5:5-6, 14, 23, 6:32, 33), and both distinguish the ways of the woman from the "path of life" (5:6, 6:23-24). These speeches do differ, namely, 5:1-23 warns against illicit sexual relations in general while 6:20-35 specifies the problem of adultery with a married woman.

⁹¹ The designation "strange" (נָכַר) occurs in 5:3, 20, but not in 6:20-35.

Nonetheless, both lectures urge the son to accept the rhetor's warning and avoid the strange/foreign woman (5:1-3, 6:20, 24). These similarities distinguish 5:1-23 and 6:20-35 as the first two speeches of a third subset of lectures in Proverbs 1-9, namely, lectures that warn the son against illicit sexual liaisons. Only one other lecture, namely 7:1-27, possesses the same formal and thematic features as these two lectures. Analysis of this tenth, and final speech will conclude my exegesis of the ten lectures.

Proverbs 7:1-27

1. Text and Translation

- 7:1 My son, guard my words,
and store up my commandments with you.
- 7:2 Guard my commandments and live,
[guard] my teaching like the apple of your eye.⁹²
- 7:3 Bind them upon your fingers,
write them upon the tablet of your heart.
- 7:4 Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"
and cry out to insight, "Relative,"
- 7:5 in order to keep you from the strange woman,
from the foreigner who makes her words smooth.
- 7:6 For at the window of my house,
I looked out through my lattice-work.
- 7:7 I observed among the immature,
I discerned among the young men, a youth who lacked sense.
- 7:8 He was passing by in the street near her corner,
walking in the road to her house;
- 7:9 in the twilight, in the evening,
in the darkness of the middle of the night.

⁹² יָשׁוּן ("apple [of your eye]") is a diminutive form of אִישׁ ("man"). This etymology led Oesterley (*Proverbs*, 49-50) to conclude that "this must originally have had reference to the widespread belief that the soul resided in the pupil of the eye." So, the son must guard his eye because it contains his soul. Oesterley's hypothesis is overturned by the further use of יָשׁוּן in this lecture to refer to the "middle" of the night (7:9). יָשׁוּן simply denotes the middle or core, and thus, the "middle" or "pupil" of the eye.

- 7:10 Then, see, a woman came to meet him,
dressed like a prostitute and crafty.
- 7:11 (She is boisterous and defiant,
her feet do not stay in her own house.
- 7:12 Sometimes in the street, sometimes in the plazas,
she lays in ambush near every corner.)
- 7:13 She seized him and kissed him,
she showed no shame⁹³ and said to him:
- 7:14 "I had to make peace offerings,
today I have completed my vows.
- 7:15 So I came out to meet you,
to search for you, and I have found you!
- 7:16 I have spread coverings on my couch,
dark woven Egyptian linens.
- 7:17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,
aloes, and cinnamon.
- 7:18 Come, let us drink our fill of love-making until morning,
let us delight ourselves with love.
- 7:19 For the man is not at home,⁹⁴
he has gone on a distant journey.
- 7:20 He took a bag of money with him
and will not return home until the full moon."
- 7:21 She swayed him by the profuseness of her persuasion,
she seduced him by the smoothness of her lips.
- 7:22 At once, he followed her;
he went in like a bull to slaughter;
Like a stag prancing to fetters,⁹⁵

⁹³ הֵעִיזָה פָּנֶיהָ; literally, "she shamelessly shows her face."

⁹⁴ אֵין הָאִישׁ בְּבֵיתוֹ; lit., "the man is not in his house."

⁹⁵ The text of 7:22c is in disarray. The MT וְכַעֲכֶס אֶל-מוֹסֵר אֱוִיל (lit., "and like an anklet to discipline the fool") makes little sense in itself, and even less sense in the context of 7:22-23. My translation is based on the following emendations:

1. וְכַעֲכֶס ("as/like skips") for וְכַעֲכֶס ("like an anklet"); see Driver, "Problems in the Hebrew Text of Proverbs," 241; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 117.

2. מוֹסֵר ("fetters, chains") for מוֹסֵר ("discipline")

3. אֵיל ("stag") for אֱוִיל ("fool"); cf. LXX ("dog"), Vulg. ("lamb"). This emendation is supported by the presence of other animal imagery in verses 22-23.

See the discussions and similar emendations by Toy ("Like a calf that is led to the stall" [*Proverbs*, 155-56]), Eitan ("as a deer is checked by a rope" ["The Crux in Proverbs 7:22,"

- 7:23 until an arrow pierces his liver;
Like a bird hurries to a net,
and it does not realize that it will [cost] his life.
- 7:24 So now, my son,⁹⁶ listen to me,
pay attention to the words of my mouth.
- 7:25 Do not let your heart turn aside to her roads,
do not go astray in her paths.
- 7:26 For many are the corpses⁹⁷ that she has laid low,
and countless are all those whom she has killed.
- 7:27 Her house is the road to Sheol,⁹⁸
going down to the chambers of death.

2. The Limits of the Rhetorical Unit

Scholars generally agree on the boundaries this speech for the following reasons.⁹⁹ 1) The preceding lecture concluded with a clear epilogue in 6:32-35. 2) 7:1-5 introduces a new speech with the vocative **בְּנִי** + general imperatives ("guard" [שמר] and "store up" [צפן]). 3) Although thematically similar, the rhetorical strategy of 7:1-27 differs significantly from that in 6:20-35 (see below). Hence, most

AJSL 43 (1926): 60-63]), and Scott ("Like a stag prancing into captivity" [*Proverbs*, 64]). Cf., Oesterley ("Or as fetters to the correction of the fool" [*Proverbs*, 53-55]), Delitzsch ("As one bereft of reason to the restrain of fetters" [*Proverbs*, 169-170]), and Hudson ("as in fetters to correction" ["Proverbs 7:22-23," *ExpTim* 55 (1944): 277]).

⁹⁶ The MT of 7:24 reads **וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ בְּכִים שְׁמָעוּ**; ("sons listen [pl.] . . . and pay attention [pl.]"). This reading is suspect because of the preceding (7:1ff) and subsequent singular address (7:25), as well as the singular reading of the LXX of 7:24. Scott (*Proverbs*, 64) explains that the plurals in the MT of 7:24 are most likely due to a scribal error in which the scribe mistook the enclitic **ם** of **בְּנִים** to be a plural marker, and thus changed the singular verbs in 7:24 to plurals (cf. 5:7). See also, Toy, *Proverbs*, 157; and Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 55.

⁹⁷ **הָלָלִים**; lit., "pierced" or "struck dead."

⁹⁸ **דֶּרֶכֵי שְׁאוֹל**; lit., "the roads to Sheol."

⁹⁹ E.g., Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 156-72; Scott, *Proverbs*, 63-65; McKane, *Proverbs*, 331-32; Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 60-61; Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 83.

scholars concur that 7:1 marks the beginning of a new lecture.¹⁰⁰ There is also conclusive evidence that this lecture extends through and ends with 7:27. 1) A summary appeal in 7:24-27 concludes the lecture of chapter 7.¹⁰¹ 2) 8:1-3 heralds a speech by woman wisdom (8:4-36). 3) The topic of 8:1-36 is different from that of 7:1-27, namely, the acceptance of wisdom rather than the danger of the strange woman. 4) The rhetorical sub-units of 7:1-27 present a unified and cohesive argument.¹⁰²

3. Analysis of the Artistic Proofs

Like the other members of this subset (5:1-23 and 6:20-35), this speech warns the son about the danger of sexual relations with a "strange" (נָכַר; 7:5, cf. 5:3) or "foreign" (נָכַר; 7:5, cf. 5:20, 6:24) woman. Also like these speeches, 7:1-27 alerts the son about this woman's smooth tongue (7:5, 21; cf. 5:3, 6:24). However, in

¹⁰⁰ These arguments for the beginning of a new speech in 7:1 stand against Ringgren's reading (*Sprüche/Prediger*, ATD, vol. 16 [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962], 32-35) of 6:20-7:27 as a single literary unit.

¹⁰¹ 7:24 meets the criteria for beginning a new speech, namely, the vocative בְּנִי + general imperatives. Here, however, this formula introduces a summary conclusion, not a new lecture. Unlike other instances of בְּנִי + general imperatives, the contents of the following verses (vv. 25-27) depend on the preceding rhetoric. Taken alone, 7:24-27 does not identify the third person feminine pronouns "her" or "she" (vv. 25-27), or explicate the "roads" and "paths" that the son must avoid. Instead, these verses make a final summary appeal based on the preceding discussion of the strange woman and her seductive ways.

¹⁰² Whybray argues that the vivid and polished moral story (vv. 6-23) is "of a literary type quite distinct from that to which the discourses belong" (*Wisdom in Proverbs*, 50). Consequently, he regards verses 4 and 6-24 to be later additions to the original instruction (7:1-3, 5, 25-27). This extreme redaction, lacking textual evidence and persuasive arguments, has not found acceptance among scholars (e.g., McKane, *Proverbs*, 331-32). On Whybray's method in general, see above, pp. 216-218.

contrast to 5:1-23 and 6:20-35, the outstanding feature of this lecture is the rhetor's citation (or fictive creation) of the strange woman's seductive speech. The aim of this final lecture is not simply to warn the son against illicit sexual relations, but to prepare him for the verbal assault of the strange/foreign woman.

a. Logos

In Western rhetorical theory, the aim of this lecture (namely, to warn the son against the danger and seduction of the strange woman) falls within the category of deliberative rhetoric. Further, the arrangement of this lecture corresponds to the standard divisions of Western deliberative rhetoric.

Proem - 7:1 a
 Proposition - 7:1-5
 Proof - 7:6-23
 Epilogue - 7:24-27

The rhetor addresses his speech to "my son" (בְּנִי). As in each of the lectures that use this proem, the vocative "my son" establishes both an authoritative and personal relationship between the rhetor and his audience. He speaks as a father/teacher to his son/pupil. With this relationship affirmed, the rhetor presents his proposition. First, he appeals to the son to keep his teaching ("guard [שָׁמַר] my words, and store up my commandments [מִצְוֹת] with you," 7:1). This proposal is essentially identical to that in 6:20a ("Guard [שָׁמַר] my son, the commandment [מִצְוֹת] of your father, and do not disregard the teaching of your mother") and 5:2 ("in order to guard [שָׁמַר] discretion, and so that your lips will protect knowledge"), the other lectures of

this subset. In each of these lectures, the rhetor urges the son to observe carefully and attentively his impending warning.

In 7:2-4, a three-fold elaboration intensifies the rhetor's appeal for compliance.

1) The rhetor implores the son to guard his teaching like a precious and sensitive body part, namely, "like the apple of your eye" (7:2). 2) He urges the son to make a commitment constantly to keep his guidance in mind and internalize it ("bind them upon your fingers, write them upon the tablet of your heart," 7:3).¹⁰³ 3) The rhetor encourages the son to establish an intimate relationship with wisdom and insight: "Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister' (אֲחָתִי) and cry out to insight, 'Relative' (מִדָּע)" (7:4). The term "my sister" (אֲחָתִי) may designate a lover or bride.¹⁰⁴ The expression "relative" (מִדָּע) refers to an undefined kinship relation.¹⁰⁵ The combination of these terms in 7:4 carefully identifies the type of relationship the son should have with wisdom/insight. Whereas אֲחָתִי ("my sister") may denote a lover or a wife, in parallel construction with מִדָּע ("relative"), אֲחָתִי is best understood as "bride" or "wife," not "lover."¹⁰⁶ In the rhetoric of 7:1-27, this is an important

¹⁰³ The figure of binding "them on your fingers" does not appear to be apotropaic, but a graphic means by which the son would constantly be reminded of the father's teaching. See Toy, *Proverbs*, 144; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 111.

¹⁰⁴ For example, "You have ravished my heart, my sister (אֲחָתִי), my bride (כַּלָּה)" (Cant 4:9 [NRSV]; see also, 4:10,12, 5:1,2, 8:8).

¹⁰⁵ For example, "Now Naomi had a kinsman (Ketib - מִיָּדָע; Qere - מִדָּע) on her husband's side" (Ruth 2:1a [NRSV], see also, 3:2).

¹⁰⁶ Most scholars and translators do not identify the synthetic parallelism of "sister" and "relative" in Proverbs 7:4 and, thus, assert two different personifications rather than one, i.e., wisdom is a "sister" (perhaps meaning bride) and insight is a "friend." See, e.g., Scott, *Proverbs*, 63 and NRSV. Those that recognize synthetic parallelism include the NJV, NIV

qualification. The father does not encourage the son to have an affair with wisdom instead of the strange woman. Rather, he urges the son to make wisdom/insight his legitimate bride and avoid the illicit advances of the strange/foreign woman.

After this elaborate appeal for the son's compliance, the speaker introduces the topic of this lecture, namely, the strange woman. The purpose of this speech is "to keep you from the strange woman" (7:5a). Immediately, the rhetor identifies the danger posed by this woman: She "makes her words smooth" (7:5b). Like a fish hook, her rhetoric is easily swallowed and its consequences recognized too late. Thus, the aim of this lecture, introduced in this proposition, is to inoculate the son so that he can withstand the seductive speech of the strange woman.

Who is this strange/foreign woman with smooth speech in Proverbs 7:1-27?

There are several clues to her identity:

1. She is dressed like a prostitute (7:10). But,
2. She is married; she claims that her husband is out of town (7:19-20).
3. She is an Israelite; she claims to have made a "peace offering" (7:14).
4. She is a woman of wealth; she claims to have expensive import items (e.g., dark woven Egyptian linens, myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon; 7:16-17).
5. She is described as "foreign" (נָכְרִיָּה) and "strange" (זָרָה; 7:5).

These data suggest that the strange woman in Proverbs 7 is a married, upper-class, Israelite woman who seizes the opportunities afforded by an absent husband to fulfill

(but "kinsman" instead of "kinswoman"), and Whybray, *Proverbs*, 112.

her sexual desires in illicit relationships. Thus, she is "foreign" and "strange," not in an ethnic sense, but in a social-moral sense of operating outside the communal norms.

A life-like, yet surreal, retelling of the drama of seduction provides the proof for the rhetor's warning against the strange woman (7:6-23). From the window of his house, the father claims that he has observed how the strange woman seduces young men.¹⁰⁷ The scene begins with a son who lacks sense (נַעַר חָסֵר-לֵב; 7:7)

¹⁰⁷ The interpreter of 7:2-23 is faced with several competing interpretations:

1. In an influential study, Bostrom (*Proverbiastudien*, 103-34) argued that 7:6-23 depicts the practices of a devotee of the goddess of love who, in conjunction with a feast, has vowed to have sexual relations with a stranger. Thus, the lecture warns the son against participation in foreign fertility cult.

2. Burns ("Proverbs 7:6-27: Vignettes from the Cycle of Astarte and Adonis," *SJOT* 9 [1995]: 20-35) pushes the mythological interpretation of 7:6-23 even further. He reads almost every aspect of the scene as a reference to the mythological cycle of Astarte and Adonis. In his opinion, "The dense mythological and cultic content of this passage firmly removes it from the realm of imprudent fornication or commonplace adultery and places it firmly in the arena where passionate religious loyalties conflict" (35).

There are several weaknesses in the approaches of Bostrom and Burns. 1) The woman's sacrifice(s) is called a שְׁלָמִים, a technical term for the Israelite peace/fellowship offering that is not used in the Hebrew Bible to denote or describe non-Israelite sacrifices. Thus, she does not appear to be an ethnic foreigner, nor is her sacrifice part of a foreign cult (see Whybray, *Proverbs*, 115). 2) Bostrom's thesis requires an unusual translation of שְׁלָמִים as "I must fulfill," rather than the common "I have fulfilled" (see Karel Van der Toorn, "Female Prostitution in Payment of Vows in Ancient Israel," *JBL* 10 [1989]: 198). 3) The alleged existence of sacred prostitution in ancient Israel is presently under challenge by some scholars (e.g., Van der Toorn, *ibid.*, 201-204; Washington, "The Strange Woman of Proverbs 1-9," 221-225). 4) Bostrom's thesis relies on the adoption of the LXX ("from the window of her house . . . she looks out") against the MT ("my house . . . I looked out") in 7:6-7. According to Bostrom, like the goddess Ishtar, the woman stands in the window to attract attention to herself. Against this emendation and reading, the MT makes excellent sense. Further, scholars are unanimous in their understanding that the "lattice-work," through which this person looks, would provide privacy (e.g., "through which [the lattice] a person standing within may see the street without being seen from without" [Toy, *Proverbs*, 146]). Thus, Bostrom's claim immediately breaks down in verse 6. If it is the woman who looks out in order to reveal herself in the window, the lattice-work is a major obstacle.

3. Van der Toorn ("Female Prostitution in Payment of Vows," 197-205) argues that the strange/foreign woman is an Israelite who has taken an ordinary vow, but lacks the money she needs to discharge her obligation (her husband has taken all the money, 7:20). Thus, she turns to prostitution as a means of acquiring the necessary funds. Against this hypothesis, Washington ("The Strange Woman of Proverbs 1-9," 225-227) questions the combination of

who happens to pass near the woman's "corner" (פִּנָּה; 7:8).¹⁰⁸ He is not only in the wrong place, but in this place at the wrong time(s),¹⁰⁹ namely, "in the twilight, in the evening, in the darkness of the middle of the night" (7:9). Most interpreters recognize that these phrases refer to different time periods. Consequently, many have emended the MT so that the verse refers to only one time (e.g., "at twilight, as the day was

piety and immorality demanded by Van der Toorn's reading, and points out that although Proverbs 7:5-27 compares the woman to a prostitute, she is not explicitly identified as a prostitute. Further, the husband's taking of a money bag does not necessarily mean that she has been left penniless, nor does 7:5-27 indicate any expectation of payment from the son (Bums, "Proverbs 7:6-27: Vignettes," 27-28)

4. Several feminist scholars have advanced the thesis that the speaker in chp. 7 is not a male (i.e., the father), but a female (i.e., the mother; see Alice Ogden Bellis, "The Gender and Motives of the Wisdom Teacher in Proverbs 7," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 6 [1996]: 15-22; Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, "The I Persona in Proverbs 7," in *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993], 57-62. For an especially good discussion of the significance this gender difference makes in the rhetoric, see Mieke Heijerman, "Who Would Blame Her? The 'Strange' Woman of Proverbs 7," in *Reflections on Theology & Gender*, ed. Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes and Athalya Brenner [Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1994], 25-27). This claim of an female voice (author) rather than a male voice cannot be dismissed. The speaker of 7:1-5, 21-27 and/or 7:6-23 could be a woman. However, the evidence is not strong. a) The "looking through the window" type scene in the Old Testament most often denotes a female subject, but not always (e.g., Abimelech, Gen 26:8; for discussions of this type scene see, McKane, *Proverbs*, 335-36; Robert H. O'Connell, "Proverbs 7:16-17: A Case of Fatal Deception in a 'Woman and the Window' Type-Scene," *VT* 41 (1991): 235-237; and Burns, "Proverbs 7:6-27: Vignettes," 21-26. b) It would seem that if 7:1-27 were the speech of a female rebuker, there would be some reference in this speech to "the instruction of the mother" (e.g., 1:8 and 6:20). c) The evidence suggests that the ten lectures are the work of a male teacher(s). 4:1-9 explicitly identifies the teacher as a male ("I was a son of my father, delicate and alone before my mother," 4:3). In 5:13, the son refers to those who have addressed him as "my teachers" and "my instructors," both masculine plural nouns (see also 3:12). Again, this evidence does not rule out the possibility of a female speaker in chp. 7, but it does cast doubt on such a reading.

¹⁰⁸ Against Delitzsch (*Proverbs*, 159), the son does not deliberately walk to the woman's corner or wait for her to appear. Such an understanding of verse 8 goes against the explicit claim that the woman's smooth rhetoric is the problem (7:5, 21). If the son intentionally seeks out the woman, the scene does not support the rhetor's concern because the son has sought her out and is ready to follow her without her uttering a single "smooth" word of persuasion.

¹⁰⁹ Kidner, *Proverbs*, 75.

fading, as the dark of night set in" [NIV]).¹¹⁰ Such emendation fails to recognize the nuance of the rhetoric. The multiple times assigned to this scene indicate that the father has witnessed this event, not just once, but on numerous occasions - in the twilight, in the evening, and in the dead of night. Thus, this story is typical, or a compilation of the many times the father has watched a young man fall victim to a strange woman.

The rhetor continues to set the stage. Next, a woman appears, undoubtedly the נְכִירָה / זָרָה from the proposition (7:5), and meets the son in the street (7:10).

Tonight, the father sees that she is dressed like a prostitute and, unlike the senseless son, she has specific plans - - for seduction (7:10). Again, this is not the first time the father has seen this woman. Rather, from his previous experience, he adds a parenthetical summary of her character. She is loud or boisterous (הַמְּיָה) and possesses a stubborn self-will (7:11b; 7:11a). The father also knows that this is not her first illicit venture into the streets; "her feet" never stay home (7:11b).¹¹¹ She constantly prowls the streets and the plazas looking for a victim (7:11b-12).¹¹² On this night, returning to the present scene, the woman "seizes" (חִזַּק) the son and kisses him.

¹¹⁰ See also, Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 159-60; Dahood, *Proverbs and Northwest Semitic Philology*, 14-15; McKane, *Proverbs*, 336.

¹¹¹ Van Leeuwen ("The Book of Proverbs," 85) suggests that "the term for 'legs' רַגְלַיִם *raglayim*) anticipates the purpose of her roaming, for 'legs' is a common euphemism for private parts (Judg 3:24; 2 Kgs 18:27; Isa 7:20)."

¹¹² The pervasive presence of the woman laying in ambush "near every corner" (7:12b) not only demeans her character, but warns the son that such a woman cannot be easily avoided. Her "corner" is not a fixed position in the city, but a mobile, ever changing place of ambush.

True to her character, she shows no shame, but openly and brazenly speaks to the son, or better, propositions him (7:13).¹¹³

The crux of the seduction is the woman's speech. Already, the rhetor has warned the son that the foreign woman "makes her words smooth" (7:5). Later, in the denouement of the story, the rhetor will observe that the son was swayed "by the profuseness of her persuasion" and seduced "by the smoothness of her lips" (7:21). Two questions, then, guide my analysis of her speech. 1) How does she achieve her rhetorical goals? 2) Why does the father condemn her rhetoric as "smooth"?

The woman opens her speech with a narrative or rehearsal of recent events. To begin, she claims that she has just fulfilled a vow and offered a peace offering (7:14). A primary feature of the peace offering in ancient Israel was the feast provided by the offering. Not all of the meat was consumed on the altar or kept by the priest, but some was returned to the worshipper for her/his consumption (Lev. 7:11-18). The implication of the woman's statement, then, is that she has fresh meat at home, ready to eat.¹¹⁴ Further, as Van Leeuwen points out, her words may also subtly communicate her sexual availability. The sacrifice of a fellowship offering required a state of ritual purity, i.e., she is not menstruating.¹¹⁵ Next, she explains her presence

¹¹³ Dijk-Hemmes' ("The I Persona in Proverbs 7," 59) observes that the meeting of the strange woman and the young man is described like the beginning of a rape scene, i.e., she "seizes him" (7:13). According to Dijk-Hemmes, the physical power differential between men and women causes the woman to seduce her prey by the "smoothness of her lips" rather than brute force.

¹¹⁴ The NIV makes this implication explicit: "I have peace offerings at home" (7:14a). See also, Toy, *Proverbs*, 151; Scott, *Proverbs*, 64-65.

¹¹⁵ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 85.

in the street as a diligent attempt to find *this son*: "So I came out to meet you [singular], to search for you [singular], and I have found you [singular]!" (7:15). Her statement may be read in two different ways. 1) She may be telling the truth. If so, her search for this particular young man indicates that this is not their first meeting but the continuation of an ongoing illicit relationship.¹¹⁶ 2) She may be lying.¹¹⁷ If so, her professed search for "you" is a nothing more than a rhetorical ploy to flatter the son, at least in the father's version of the story. In view of the happenstance of the son's presence (7:8), this second option seems more likely. She has not come out to find this particular young man. Rather, the father observes that any young man she meets immediately becomes the feigned object of her intensive search. Finally, the woman tells the son what else she has prepared at home, namely, luxurious coverings on her couch and a bed perfumed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon (7:16-17).¹¹⁸ Each of these items has erotic overtones (cf. Cant 4:14). Thus, her narrative ends with a subtle, sensuous invitation to join her on her couch and bed.

From a rhetorical perspective, the opening lines of the woman's speech are well-constructed or, to use the father's term, "smooth." Her narrative sets forth the allure of a feast, flatters the ego of the son, and then mentions the amorous preparation

¹¹⁶ Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 52.

¹¹⁷ Duane A. Garrett ("Votive Prostitution Again: A Comparison of Proverbs 7:13-14 and 21:28-29," *JBL* 109 [1990]: 681-82) suggests that פָּנֶיהָ הִצִּיחָה ("makes her face strong" [Garrett's translation]) denotes that the woman is lying in some or all that she says.

¹¹⁸ J N. Aletti ("Seduction et Parole," 129) astutely points out that the son is not seduced by the odor of the perfume or the sight of the luxurious fabric but by the woman's description of the perfume and the fabric. It is her speech, not the objects themselves, that seduces the son.

of her bed. Her rhetoric has steadily progressed to the point that her intentions are fairly clear by the end of verse 17, and, yet, she has not yet explicitly set forth her proposition. Not until verse 18, over half-way through the speech, does the woman finally enunciate a straightforward proposal: "Come, let us drink our fill of love-making until morning, let us delight ourselves with love" (7:18).

With her proposition now made plain, the woman concludes her speech with logical argumentation to convince the son that her invitation may be accepted without detection or consequence. To begin, she announces that her husband is not home (7:19, literally, "the man is not in his house").¹¹⁹ This statement, as promising as it might be for a night of illicit love-making, does not fully resolve the danger of discovery by her husband. Where is her absent husband - next door, across town, or far away? So, next, the woman explains that her husband has gone on a distant journey (7:19b). This answer happily resolves the question of her husband's whereabouts, but raises yet another question. When does she expect her husband home? Now, the woman offers two final reassurances. 1) Her husband took a large sum of money with him (7:20a), i.e., his trip is not only far away, but of considerable duration. 2) She does not expect her husband to return until the full moon (7:20b).¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Delitzsch (*Proverbs*, 167) and Whybray (*Proverbs*, 116) suggest that the expression "the man is not in his house" may denote the woman's hostility or estrangement from her husband (cf. Toy 1899: 154). Conversely, this expression may denote the woman's power. She identifies herself via herself, not in relationship to the man, e.g., "my husband." Regardless, this statement enables the woman to distance the son from the illicit nature of her proposal. She does not talk directly about *her husband*, but about "the man" who needs to be avoided.

¹²⁰ On specific calculations of the date of husbands return see Toy (*Proverbs*, 154) and Delitzsch (*Proverbs*, 167-68). Van Leeuwen ("The Book of Proverbs," 85) suggests that the phrase "will not return home" [lit., will not come into his house"] refers to both the man's

The woman's argument is now complete and, even in the estimation of the father, very persuasive. How does her speech persuade? To begin, the father seems to suggest that her speech is addressed to a young man who is ripe for the taking, i.e., he is senseless and idly wandering about the dark streets. Next, the first half of her speech is composed of strong pathetic arguments. She flatters the son and invites him to share her feast and her bed for a night of sensual pleasure. In contrast to these pathetic arguments, the second half of her speech is based on logical reasoning. Her husband is not home but on a distant journey, a long journey that will not bring him home until the full moon. Thus, the threat of being caught is logically resolved.

Why does the father describe the woman's rhetoric as "smooth" or seductive? On the one hand, it may be that her speech is "smooth" because of the location of the proposition in the speech. She is not immediately forthcoming about her intentions. Instead, she begins with an innocent invitation to a meal, continues with flattery, mentions her couch and bed, and then, finally, asserts her proposition for a night of love-making (7:18). Aletti and Yee also point out that the rhetoric of the strange woman confuses or numbs the son's capacity to discern between right and wrong.¹²¹ For example, she speaks as a true spouse would speak to her husband (cf. Cant 3:1-4), she uses the same terminology employed by the father and woman wisdom (e.g., "let us drink our fill of love-making until morning," 7:18; cf. 5:19), and, in certain respects, she acts like woman wisdom (e.g., she is in the streets and plazas, and is

home and the woman's body since the verb **אָב** sometimes denotes intercourse.

¹²¹ Aletti, "Seduction et Parole," 132-35; Yee, "I Have Perfumed My Bed," 62-63.

loud; 7:11-12, cf. 1:20-21). She also presents herself as a faithful participant in sacrificial worship (7:14). These features of the strange woman's speech create ambiguity and confusion. Thus, the father may deem her rhetoric "smooth" because it does not follow the "up-front" structure of his own rhetoric and because it deliberately confuses what is morally right and wrong.

On the other hand, the father's denunciation of the woman's speech may reflect nothing more than his bias. Her speech is, in fact, no more misleading than the lecture of 1:8-19, where the father/rhetor used a "bait and switch" technique (see pp. 91-103). Nor is this woman deceptive about her status or her desires. She admits that she is married and that she wants a "one night stand" with the son (7:18-20). Thus, the father's pejorative description of her speech may not be due to her rhetoric *per se*, but the content of her appeal. She proposes an activity that is contradictory to the teaching of the father. More, she dares to challenge his claims that such activity can escape devastating consequences (7:18-20; cf. 7:26-27).¹²²

Regardless of why the father describes the strange woman's rhetoric as "smooth," his fundamental concern is that she is persuasive and, in this story, successful. The strength of her rhetoric ("the profuseness of her persuasion")¹²³ sways the young son, and her smooth lips "seduce him" (7:21). Suddenly, at once, he follows her. The rhetor describes this tragic result with three figures of speech. 1) The son follows her like a bull being led to slaughter (7:22). 2) He accepts her invitation

¹²² Aletti, "Seduction et Parole," 135.

¹²³ On the term **קל**, see chp. 6.

like a stag, prancing ahead, ignorant of the fetters and deadly arrow that await him (7:22c-23a). 3) He hurries after her like a foolish bird rushing to a baited net, not realizing that his life is at stake (7:23). In each analogy, the rhetor compares the son's actions to that of a stupid animal and, thus, suggests that falling prey to the strange woman is a sub-human failure that will end in a fate befitting an animal, not a human.

As the strange woman leads the young son away and out of sight, the drama ends and rhetor's speech reaches its climax/epilogue. In view of the tragic story of seduction, the rhetor reasserts his proposition. Instead of listening to the strange woman, the son must "listen to me" and "pay attention to the words of my mouth" (7:24; cf. 7:1-4). Further, the rhetor summarizes his "words" in this lecture: "Do not let your heart turn aside to her roads, do not go astray in her paths" (7:25; cf. 7:5). The son not only must listen to the father, he must carefully avoid any situation in which he might be subjected to the woman's smooth speech.

A final, passionate argument concludes the rhetor's appeal. The son must avoid this woman because the consequences of falling prey to her seduction are lethal and irrevocable. The luxurious and perfumed bed offered by the strange woman will become the son's funeral bed.¹²⁴ According to the father, she personally has brought down many a young man to the status of a corpse, i.e., she has killed countless victims (7:26).¹²⁵ In fact, the father claims, her mortality rate is so high that her house is aptly

¹²⁴ O'Connell, "Proverbs 7:16-17," 238-239.

¹²⁵ The threat of death in 7:26-27 is foremost a threat of social death. On the possible mythological background of the death imagery in 7:26-27, see, McKane, *Proverbs*, 341; and Whybray, *Proverbs*, 117-118.

called the road (or literally, "roads" [דֶּרֶךְ], 7:27a) to Sheol. Entrance into her house leads straight to the chambers of death (7:27b).¹²⁶

b. Ethos

In his warning against the strange woman, the rhetor of 7:1-27 assumes the position of a reliable and well-accepted witness. He provides his, and only his, testimony. He does not mention God or allude to any authority outside himself.¹²⁷ As Toy puts it, "here, as elsewhere, the sage is his own authority."¹²⁸ Presumably, then, the rhetor occupies a high position of respect or power in the eyes of his audience.

Mieke Heijerman disagrees. After pointing out the passivity of the men in this text versus the activity and success of the strange woman, she concludes that "the speaker feels powerless, otherwise why should the speaker repeatedly ask the son to

¹²⁶ Newsom ("Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom," 149,156) reads the phrase "her house" as a reference, not only to her literal residence, but also to her body: "Indeed her vagina is the gate of Sheol. Her womb, death itself."

¹²⁷ Some of the phrases in the proposition of this lecture are similar to texts in Deuteronomy. For example, compare Proverbs 7:2b ("[guard] my teaching like the apple of your eye") to Deuteronomy 32:10 ("He the Lord] . . . guarded him as the apple of his eye" [NRSV]), or Proverbs 7:3 ("Bind them upon your fingers, write them upon the tablet of your heart") to Deuteronomy 6:6,8-9 ("Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart ... Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" [NRSV]). On the basis of these similarities, McKane (*Proverbs*, 333) posits that 7:3 "is phrased in a way closely resembling passages which deal with law and covenant, and may be a deliberate literary conflation of these passages." Thus, Van Leeuwen ("The Book of Proverbs," 84) concludes that the rhetor presents the "parent's" words as a faithful reflection of, or echo of, the law.

The possibility of a textual connection between Proverbs 7:3 and Deuteronomy 6 cannot be dismissed (although the limited similarities may denote nothing more than incidental use of common terminology). However, even if accepted, this ploy to increase the rhetor's ethos is limited to verse 3 (and perhaps 7:2b). Nothing else in the lecture suggests any reference to previous texts or traditions.

¹²⁸ Toy, *Proverbs*, 157.

listen? A powerful person would need to just say the word and, consequently, achieve obedience."¹²⁹ Heijerman raises a valid point. The father/rhetor in 7:1-27 is very concerned about, or even afraid of, the power possessed by the strange woman. This concern/fear is the rhetorical problem behind the speech. Consequently, the rhetor's strategy includes a vicious attack on the ethos of the strange woman. His introduction of this woman in 7:10-13 could be appropriately designated as "death by description." She looks like a prostitute; she has a crafty heart; she is loud; she is defiant; she does not stay at home; she lays in ambush; and she shows no shame. Further, the father presents her desires as self-centered: "I had to make peace offerings ... I have completed my vows . . . I came out . . . I have found ... I have spread . . . I have perfumed" (7:14-17). She feigns a night of mutual pleasure, "let us delight ourselves with love" (7:18), but her words are only a ploy to lead the son into her death-trap (7:26-27). Of course, against her self-centered quest for the son's life, the father presents himself as one who is solely concerned for the son's welfare (e.g., "guard my commandments and live," 7:2).

The vicious denunciation of the strange woman does imply, as Heijerman suggests, considerable anxiety for her power. However, Heijerman's claim that the rhetor "feels powerless" overlooks the ethos presupposed by this rhetor. He exhibits almost no concern for developing his ethos. He does not bolster his own power by appealing to other authorities, e.g., God or tradition. Rather, he confronts the powerful strange woman from his own powerful position that only requires his testimony about

¹²⁹ Heijerman, "Who Would Blame Her," 23.

her. His extensive warning against her does not, therefore, denote his powerlessness, although it does acknowledge the strength and danger of her power.¹³⁰

c. Pathos

This speech makes full use of diverse emotional arguments to gain and hold the attention of the audience, as well as convince the audience to accept the rhetor's proposition. For example, the opening verses of the lecture gain the son's attention by establishing a positive emotional tone. In a straightforward pathetic argument, the father promises that the son may acquire genuine life by obeying his commandments (7:2). Behind this promise is an appeal to the son's pleasure or desire for a successful life. In a slightly more complex pathetic argument, the rhetor also urges the son to make wisdom/insight his bride. Here, the rhetor evokes the positive emotions associated with marriage, namely, close companionship, love, and sexual fulfillment.

The drama of 7:7-23 introduces emotional tension into the speech that holds the attention of the audience. A young man who lacks sense is walking in the night when he passes by "her corner" (7:8). Suddenly, a woman comes out of the shadows, seizes him, and kisses him (7:10,13). The rhetor's description of the scene strikes an emotional chord. The audience may be titillated by the dress of the woman ("like a prostitute," 7:10) and her amorous advances on the young man. At the same time,

¹³⁰ Bellis ("The Gender and Motives of the Wisdom Teacher in Proverbs 7," 22) suggests that the rhetor's concern for the strange woman may be a psychological ploy. According to Bellis, the only way to stop prostitution in ancient Israel was to stop men from seeking out prostitutes. So, instead of nagging the men to avoid the "strange" woman, "(S)he counsels men to be strong enough not to allow themselves to be seduced." In other words, the depiction of a powerful woman is a savvy psychological strategy that plays off the young man's ego.

they may feel a certain uneasiness or fear for the young man. The characters are not equally matched - a youth who "lacks heart" (חֶסֶד לֹא; 7:7b) versus a woman with a "crafty heart" (נִצָּרֶת לֵב; 7:10b). How will this chance encounter resolve itself?

The narrative tension teases the emotions of the audience.

As the narrative progresses, the rhetor further builds emotional tension through the speech of the strange woman. Her use of emotional arguments is neither subtle nor reserved. She invites the son to an immediate and complete gratification of his sexual desires. Her offer not only stimulates the senses of the son, but the rhetor's audience. She says that she has covered her couch with Egyptian linens and perfumed her bed with erotic spices (7:16-17). Her speech is graphic: "let us drink our fill of love-making until morning" (7:18). Finally, she builds the narrative tension even further by referring to her absent husband. The stakes of this clandestine meeting are high: she is a married woman.

In response to the woman's manipulation of desires, the father reacts with warnings filled with negative pathos. According to the father, her promise of immediate gratification is dangerous. The son who follows after her like an animal (a bull, a stag, a bird) will die like an animal (7:22-23). In the epilogue, the rhetor again threatens the audience with death. The strange woman has laid low many corpses; she has killed countless men; her house leads to Sheol, straight to the chambers of death. The pathos of these warnings is overwhelmingly negative; the foolish son who gives in to his sensual desires will die (7:26-27).

The pathos of this lecture, then, progresses through a range of emotional manipulations. Positive emotional arguments secure the son's attention and emotional tension maintains his attention. The rhetoric of the woman plays the son's sensual desires like a masterful conductor and leads him to her bed. In response, the father evokes the fears of his audience. The foolish son may gratify his sexual desires, but in the process he will meet an unexpected death.

4. Summary & Conclusions

The rhetorical situation of 7:1-27 is an educational setting in which a teacher of high esteem addresses his pupil(s). Within this setting, the teacher discerns one major rhetorical problem: The son will be tempted to fulfill his sexual desires through illicit relationships with married women. Further, the rhetor suggests that this temptation may be aggravated by the powerful rhetoric of married women. Such a woman threatens to ambush the son with her seductive actions and words, and lead him to an untimely death. Thus, the aim of this speech, as presented in the proposition (7:1-5), is not only to keep the son away from the "strange" married woman, but to prepare him for her verbal assault.

In order to achieve his rhetorical goals, the father presents an elaborate and emotionally packed drama of seduction. On numerous occasions, the father claims that he has seen what happens to a son who does not guard his teaching and does not take seriously his warning about the strange woman. Such a son finds himself at the wrong place at the wrong time. A woman accosts him, seizes him, and kisses him. She speaks to him and sways him by the power of her rhetoric, and the son follows

after her like an ignorant animal. The narrative tension of the story draws the audience into the father's own rhetorical stratagem. As the couple moves out of sight, the rhetor pronounces the son's epitaph. He went like a bull to the slaughter, like a stag to a trap, like a bird to a net. According to the father, the best and only protection against the strange woman is to "listen to me" (i.e., the father; 7:24) and avoid straying into her paths and roads (7:25). Otherwise, the father stresses, she is a one way ticket to death (7:26-27).

Conclusions: The Rhetoric of the Warnings Against Illicit Sexual Relations

The rhetoric of 5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27 demarcate these texts as a third and final subset of lectures within Proverbs 1-9, namely, warnings against illicit sexual relations. To begin, the propositions of these lectures are remarkably similar. Each speech opens with an appeal for the son to accept the forthcoming teaching of the rhetor (5:1, 6:20, 7:1). Next, the rhetor elaborates or makes an initial argument for accepting his teaching (5:2, 6:21-23, 7:2-4). Then, each proposition introduces the problem of the strange woman (5:3-6, 6:24, 7:5). This common rhetorical pattern distinguishes these lectures from both previous subsets. First, although the calls to apprenticeship (subset I) urged the son to listen or pay attention to the teacher and elaborated this call, they did not introduce or explicate any specific teaching. Second, while the calls to remember and obey expressed concern for the son "guarding" the father's teaching (3:1, 3:21, 4:21; cf. 5:1, 6:20, 7:1), they related this appeal to the son's problematic memory, a non-issue in warnings against illicit sexual relations.

The proofs of Proverbs 5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27 also distinguish these texts as discrete subset of lectures. To be sure, the proofs of these lectures confront the danger of illicit sexual relations with different rhetorical strategies. 5:1-23 employs multivalent imagery and issues both negative (the son must not go near the strange woman) and positive (the son must stay with his own wife) arguments. 6:20-35 sets forth and elaborates two proofs, namely, the high cost of adultery and the certain payment for adultery. 7:1-27 presents an emotionally packed drama of seduction. Despite this variety of argumentation, however, the common and singular focus of these proofs clearly demarcates them from the calls to apprenticeship (which exhibit no such argumentative teaching) and the calls to remember and obey (which present teaching on a variety of subjects). Further, the complex style of argumentation distinguishes the warnings about illicit sex from the simple imperative + motive clauses in the calls to remember and obey.

Finally, although some individual members of the first two subsets employed the pathos of fear to motivate their audience (e.g., 1:8-19, 4:10-19), fear characterizes the warnings against illicit sexual relations. The emotional dimension of these speeches is overwhelmingly negative. In 5:1-23, the rhetor threatens the disobedient son with a bitter outcome and a double-edged sword (5:4-5). He will give away his honor, life, wealth, and toil (5:9-10), and will be completely consumed (5:11). In 6:20-35, the speaker depicts the strange woman as one who is out to do nothing less than capture and prey upon the son. The dual fear of a high cost for adultery and the certainty of payment is heightened by ambiguity. The son will experience physical

and social tragedy due to a furious husband, but neither of these punishments is explicated in detail. In 7:1-27, the father reacts to the pleasure-filled pathos of the woman's speech with dire warnings. Here, and in each of these lectures, the rhetor threatens the son with certain death for disobedience (7:22-23, 26-27; cf. 5:5, 23, 6:32). Thus, these warnings share a common rhetorical strategy to frighten the son into obeying the father and avoiding the strange woman.

Rhetorical analysis, then, has revealed common rhetorical features (namely, the structure and content of the propositions, the common singular concern for the strange woman, complex argumentation in the proofs, and the pathos of fear) that characterize 5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27 as a discrete subset of lectures within Proverbs 1-9. The significance of this finding, and the broader implications of the rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures, will comprise the next, and final, chapter.

Chapter Six

THE RHETORIC OF THE FATHER

This dissertation has offered a fresh investigation of the ten father/son lectures in Proverbs 1-9 from the perspective of rhetorical criticism. On the one hand, to be sure, this study has traveled down many paths cleared by other scholars. I have not turned aside from the well-worn tracks established by form critical, text critical, and philological approaches. On the other hand, this dissertation has gone beyond the common path to venture into the largely unexplored rhetorical dimensions of the ten lectures.

In this dissertation, I have made two types of contributions to the interpretation of the ten lectures in Proverbs 1-9. First, use of rhetorical analysis has enabled me to offer a new perspective on old problems. In the course of my exegesis, I have reconsidered many of the long-standing interpretive difficulties in these chapters, e.g., the identity of the strange/foreign woman, the possibility of textual allusions in the speeches, the delimitation of the lectures, and the speaker/audience relationship denoted by the vocative **יְהוָה**. Though my reconsideration of these issues has not resulted in new solutions, my analysis has offered the testimony of a rhetorical perspective that supports one or another already extant hypothesis. For example, rhetorical analysis provides additional evidence that confirms the limits and integrity of

the ten lectures as accepted by most scholars. Or, to take another, more specific example, Fox has claimed, against McKane and Whybray, that Proverbs 2 is not a flawed or a problematic composition. On the contrary, Fox argues that Proverbs 2, unlike most of the lectures, has the sole purpose of encouraging the pupil in his search for wisdom.¹ My analysis of Proverbs 2 has confirmed Fox's hypothesis. Proverbs 2 presents an elaborate, carefully constructed argument for obtaining the son's attention. Rhetorical analysis of the other lectures in Proverbs 1-9 further reveals that Proverbs 2 is, in fact, one member of a subset of lectures that do no more than summon the son to apprenticeship, i.e., the acceptance of wisdom.

Within this first category of contributions, I also have considered the rhetorical implications of common interpretive problems and solutions. For example, if the rhetor does allude to other texts in 1:8-19, 2:1-22, *et al.*, such allusion embellishes the rhetor's ethos. Further, recognition of this and other devices that bolster the rhetor's ethos helps the interpreter gauge the proximity of the rhetor/audience relationship presupposed in the text. If a speech exhibits extensive concern for developing the rhetor's ethos (e.g., 4:1-9), this feature provides a fairly reliable indicator that the rhetor/audience relationship was not close. This conclusion, in turn, contributes some insight on the problematic meaning of **יָנִי**. If the rhetor presumes little if any standing in the eyes of the audience (as in 4:1-9), it seems less likely that he was a father addressing his biological son and more likely that he was a teacher addressing a group of students.

¹ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 234. See above, pp. 112-113.

The second and more significant category of contributions made by this dissertation stems from my investigation of the artistic proofs in each lecture. In contrast to most interpretations of the ten lectures, the preceding analysis has examined the ways in which each speech formulates and develops logos, ethos, and pathos to present a persuasive argument. Thus, my analysis has not been limited to understanding the central ideas of each lecture, but has concentrated on how each lecture deploys artistic proofs for persuading the son to accept the rhetor's message. This excursion beyond typical literary and historical approaches into the rhetoric of the father is not unique. Studies by Aletti, Newsom, Yee, and Crenshaw suggested the value of such rhetorical study and took steps in this direction. However, my focus on the persuasive combination of all three artistic devices and the inclusion of all ten lectures in my analysis marks a significant point of departure from present scholarship.

As a result of its distinctive focus and scope, this dissertation has uncovered new data and raised new questions about the rhetoric of the father in Proverbs 1-9. The remainder of this chapter will survey this second category of contributions. Here, I will summarize the results of the foregoing rhetorical analysis, consider possible hypotheses that account for these findings, and suggest areas for further research.

A. Summary: The Father's Rhetoric in Proverbs 1-9

1. Rhetorical Subsets in the Ten Lectures

Rhetorical analysis has revealed three types of lectures within Proverbs 1-9: 1) the calls to apprenticeship (1:8-19, 2:1-22, 4:1-9, 4:10-19), 2) the calls to remember and obey (3:1-12, 3:21-35, 4:20-27), and 3) the warnings against illicit sexual relations

(5:1-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27). The evidence for this classification comes from analysis and comparison of the artistic proofs in the lectures, namely, *logos* (rational arguments), *ethos* (credibility of the speaker), and *pathos* (emotional arguments).

Some aspects of the *logos* of the ten lectures are identical (e.g., the proem "my son" or "sons"), and others differ indiscriminately (e.g., the epilogues). Other features in the lectures, however, present consistent rhetorical patterns and, thus, the possibility of classification (see Table 2). To begin, each of the lectures set forth one of three distinct proposals: 1) hear, accept, or actively pursue the father's wisdom, 2) do not forget or lose the father's teaching, and 3) observe the father's warning against illicit sexual relations (see Table 1, p. 86). These different appeals offer *prima facie* evidence for identifying three subsets within the ten lectures.

The classification of lectures suggested by the propositions is confirmed by the correspondence of the proof in each lecture to the nuance of its proposition. For example, the group of lectures that propose the son listen to the father's instruction and actively pursue wisdom elaborate this, and only this, theme in their proof. These speeches do not explicate the father's teaching, but call the son to apprenticeship under the tutelage of the father. Similarly, the group of lectures that propose the son not forget or lose the father's teaching elaborate this, and only this, theme in their proof. These speeches remind the son of the father's teaching on a variety of topics. Finally, the group of lectures that proposes a warning against illicit sexual relations elaborate this single topic with complex argumentation in their proofs. In each lecture, the

Table 2 - The Rhetoric of the Father: A Comparison of Subsets

Text		Logos			Ethos	Pathos
Subset I	Proem	Proposition	Proof	Epilogue	Low to High	Equal Balance of Negative & Positive
	“My son” or “Oh sons”	Listen to my teaching	Citations Promises Contrasts	Summary Statements		
Subset II	“My son”	Do not Forget my teaching	Imperatives + Motive clauses	Summary Statements Caveats Final Appeals	Low to Moderate	Mostly Positive with some Negative
				Summary Statements Final Arguments Final Appeals		
Subset III	“My son”	Beware of the Strange woman	Complex Arguments Story		Moderate to Low	Mostly Negative with some Positive

nuance of the proposition corresponds to the content of the proof and confirms a tripartite classification of the speeches.

Rhetorical analysis, then, resolves one long standing puzzle in Proverbs 1-9, namely, how is the interpreter to read or account for the numerous synonymous, or nearly synonymous, verbs in the propositions of the lectures. Whybray explains,

It is remarkable - *and no satisfactory explanation has been found for this* - that although in every case the language used is similar, it is never quite identical: a remarkable number of synonyms is used, and often the same words occur in slightly different combinations.²

Rhetorical analysis offers an explanation to this mystery. The numerous verbs in the propositions suggest varied emphases in the father's rhetorical objectives. In other words, the rhetor does not indiscriminately use different terms to make the same appeal in every lecture, but carefully combines and arranges his words to formulate one of three distinct proposals.

Patterns within the ethos and pathos of the lectures add further support to my classification of the lectures (see Table 2). The calls to apprenticeship, as a group, possess a fairly even balance between positive and negative pathos, and a wide diversity of concern for the rhetor's ethos (from very low to high concern). In contrast, the calls to remember and obey primarily set forth positive emotional arguments and exhibit only low to moderate concern for the rhetor's ethos. Finally, the warnings against illicit sexual relations develop, almost exclusively, negative pathetic arguments and present moderate to low concern for the rhetor's ethos. These

² Whybray, *Proverbs*, 23-24. Italics mine.

observations do not, in themselves, establish the existence of three subsets of lectures within Proverbs 1-9. However, these patterns within the ethos and pathos of the speeches constitute collaborative evidence for the distinctions already set forth by the logos of the lectures.

Additional evidence could be cited to support a trifold classification of the ten lectures, e.g., the unique development of the theme of life in the second subset, or the strict pattern of initial statement, initial argument, and restatement in the propositions of the third subset. Nonetheless, the evidence already presented is sufficient to sustain the categorization set forth by this dissertation. The rhetoric of the father includes not one, but three different types of lectures, namely, calls to apprenticeship, calls to remember and obey, and warnings against a specific evil (i.e., illicit sexual relations).

The recognition of three different types of rhetoric in the ten lectures makes one hesitant to try to summarize the father's rhetoric in all ten lectures. For example, Fox offers an excellent summary of the main features of the father's rhetoric in Proverbs 1-9. 1) The father is authoritative. 2) Promise and warning are the most obvious rhetorical tactics. 3) The rhetor chooses the intimate intonation of a father. 4) The father creates vivid scenes. 5) The father revels in irony.³ The recognition of diverse subsets of rhetoric in Proverbs 1-9, however, requires a rethinking of these conclusions. 1) The father does speak with authority in most of the lectures, but not all. The level of presumed ethos varies in the lectures from very high (e.g., 4:10-19) to very low (e.g., 4:1-9). 2) Promise and warning are the most obvious tactics, but

³ Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," 620-624.

these pathetic arguments occur in different degrees and combinations throughout the lectures (e.g., see the variations in subset II). 3) The intonation of a father, as Fox argues, is consistent throughout all ten lectures. 4) The father creates vivid scenes only in some of the speeches, mostly in the third subset and none in the second subset. 5) Irony is present in some lectures, but especially subset III. Thus, while Fox's observations are correct for the ten lectures as a whole, the features he identifies vary between the different subsets.

2. Rhetorical Variety within the Subsets of Lectures

Rhetorical analysis also reveals that, while the lectures of each subset possess common features that distinguish them as a group, each lecture also possesses unique features that distinguish it from other group members. For example, each member of the first subset of lectures responds to something that is challenging the son's acceptance of the father's call to apprenticeship. This "something," however, appears to be different in each lecture, with the result that each speech employs a different rhetorical strategy (see Table 3). In 1:8-19, the rhetor responds to the threat of an alternative rhetoric by creating a hyperbolic fictive speech, placing this speech in the mouth of the opponent, destroying the ethos of the opponent, and making exclusive use of the pathos of fear. The rhetor's lack of ethos in 4:1-9 leads to a different strategy. Here, the rhetor makes exclusive use of positive pathos and cites (or creates) the speech of his own "father" in order to bolster his ethos. He also asserts a common bond with his audience and subtly equates his words with wisdom itself. In contrast to the lack of ethos in 4:1-9, the rhetor of 4:10-19 does not appear concerned with his

Table 3 - The Rhetoric of Subset I: The Calls to Apprenticeship

Text	Logos				Ethos	Pathos
	Proem	Proposition	Proof	Epilogue		
1:8-19	1:8a "My son"	1:8-9 Initial Stament: Positive (1:8a) Negative (1:8b) Initial Argument: Promise (1:9)	1:10-18 1. Citation of Fictive Speech (1:10-14) 2. Citations & conclusions (1:15-18)	1:19 Summary Statement	Moderate 1. Destruction of Opponent's Ethos 2. Citations	Negative: Fear
2:1-22	2:1a "My son"	2:1-11 Initial Statement "If" (2:1-4) Initial Argument: "Then" (2:5- 11)	2:12-19 Promise of Deliverance: 1. From evil men (2:12-15) 2. From the strange woman (2:16-19)	None	Moderate 1. Rhetor's words=God's words 2. Possible textual allusions	Positive: Promise of Blessing Negative: Threat of disaster
4:1-9	4:1a "Oh sons"	4:1-2 Initial Statment: Positive (4:1) Initial Argument: Quality (4:2a) Restatement: Negative (4:2b)	4:3-9 Citation of Grandfather's Speech	None	High 1. Assertion of Commonality 2. Citation of grandfather's speech. 3. Rhetor's words=Wisdom	Positive: Promise of Blessing Wisdom as Patron
4:10-19	4:10a "My son"	4:10 Initial statment: Positive (4:10a) Initial Argument: Promise (4:10b)	4:11-17 The Contrast of Two Ways 1. The Way of Wisdom (4:11- 13) 2. The Way of the Wicked (4:14-17)	4:18-19 Summary Statements: 1. Path of Righteous (4:18) 2. Path of Wicked (4:19)	Low	Positive: Benefits of wisdom. Negative: Dangers of wicked

ethos but with the son's complacency toward his teaching. Thus, he presents a contrast between the way of wisdom that he offers and the way of the wicked, the choice made by default when the son rejects his call to apprenticeship. Not surprisingly, this lecture also utilizes contrasting negative and positive pathetic arguments. Finally, the lecture of 2:1-22 offers an elaborate conditional sentence. The rhetor promises that adherence to his call will rescue the son from evil men and strange women and warns about the disastrous consequences of turning away from his call. Further, he supports his appeal by equating his words with God's words and, possibly, alluding to other texts. Thus, although the rhetoric of these four lectures distinguishes them as a subset within Proverbs 1-9, there is remarkable diversity within the subset. Each of these lectures employs a different rhetorical strategy to call the son to apprenticeship.

A similar type of diversity exists within the second subset of lectures (see Table 4). While each member of this subset admonishes the son not to forget the father's teaching, demands that the son observe this teaching, and reminds him of the content of this teaching, the specific rhetorical problems behind these lectures and, consequently, the specific rhetorical strategies differ in each lecture. The son's self-reliance appears to lie behind his forgetfulness or disdain of the father's teaching in 3:1-12. Here, the proof consists of four sets of imperatives (reminders) that alternate between positive and negative admonitions, each supported by positive pathetic arguments. In 3:21-35, the rhetorical problem seems to be the prosperity of people who do not live in accordance with the father's wisdom. These people reject the

Table 4- The Rhetoric of Subset II: The Calls to Remember and Obey

Text			Logos		Ethos	Pathos
3:1-12	Proem 3:1a “My son”	Proposition 3:1-2 Initial Statement: Negative (3:1a) Positive (3:1b) Initial Argument: Promise-Life (3:2)	Proof 3:3-10 Imperatives with Motive Clauses: Negative (3:3-4) Positive (3:5-6) Negative (3:7-8) Positive (3:9-10)	Epilogue 3:11-12 A Caveat: Failure of promises denotes God’s love.	Low to Moderate - Possible textual allusions. - Alliance with Yahweh’s desires.	Positive: Promise of Life Yahweh’s Love
3:21-35	3:21a “My son”	3:21-22 Initial statement: Negative (3:21a) Positive (3:21b) Initial Argument Promise-Life (3:22)	3:23-31 Motive Clauses: Positive (3:23-24) Positive (3:25-26) Imperatives: Negative (3:27-28) Negative (3:29-30) Negative (3:31)	3:32-35 Summary & Final Appeal: Yahweh’s intervention	Low	Positive: Promise of Life Negative: Threat of disgrace What is just
4:20-27	4:20a “My son”	4:20-22 Initial Statement: Positive (4:20) Negative (4:21a) Positive (4:21b) Initial Argument: Promise-Life (4:22)	4:23-26 Imperatives with Motive Clauses: Positive (4:23) Positive 4:24) Positive (4:25-26)	4:27 Summary and Final Appeal	Low	Positive: Promise of Life

father's teaching and succeed, hence raising the question: why should the son bother to remember and obey? The rhetor responds with negative imperatives supported by both positive and negative pathetic arguments. The specific rhetorical problem behind 4:20-27 is more difficult to discern but may be the son's complacency or lack of appreciation for the value of the father's 'wisdom. Here, the proof consists of three positive imperatives with positive pathetic arguments. Thus, while all of these lectures set forth a common proposition and use imperatives + motive clauses to remind the son of the father's teaching, each one employs a different rhetorical strategy.

Rhetorical analysis also reveals variety in the third subset of lectures (see Table 5). The propositions of these lectures are remarkably similar. Each speech makes an initial appeal for the son to accept the father's teaching, elaborates or makes an initial argument for this appeal, and introduces the specific problem of the strange or foreign woman. Thus, unlike the other two subsets, the rhetorical problem reflected in these texts seems stable, namely, the danger of illicit sexual relations. Again, however, the rhetorical strategies within these three lectures differ significantly. 5:1-23 employs multivalent imagery and sets forth negative (the son must not go near the strange woman) and positive (the son must stay with his wife) arguments. 6:20-35 integrates two proofs, namely, the high cost of adultery and the certain payment for adultery. Finally, the proof of 7:1-27 consists of an emotionally packed drama of seduction. Thus, each lecture of the third subset employs a different rhetorical strategy to warn the son against illicit sexual relations.

Table 5- The Rhetoric of Subset III: The Warnings Against Illicit Sexual Relations

Text	Logos				Ethos	Pathos
5:1-23	Proem 5:1a “My son”	Proposition 5:1-7 Initial Statement: Positive (5:1-2) Initial Argument: The Woman (5:3-6) Restatement: Positive 5:7a) Negative (5:7b)	Proof 5:8-20 Imperatives+ Arguments: 1. Negative: Stay away (5:9-14) 2. Positive: Stay with (5:15-20)	Epilogue 5:21-23 Final Arguments: 1. Theological (5:21) 2. Act/Consequence (5:22-23)	Moderate -Destruction of Opponent’s Ethos -Brief reference to Yahweh	Negative: Consequences for falling prey to the strange woman
6:20-35	6:20a “My son”	6:20-25 Initial Statement: Positive (6:20a) Negative (6:20b) Positive (6:21) Initial Argument: Promises (6:22-23) Restatement: The woman (6:24-25)	6:26-31 Two Arguments: 1. The high cost of adultery (6:26) 2. The certain payment for adultery (6:27-29) Summary (6:30-31)	6:32-35 Summary: 6:32 Final Arguments: 1. Costs specified (6:33) 2. Cause of costs (6:34) 3. Inevitability of costs (6:35)	Moderate - Possible allusions to other texts	Positive: Promises Negative: Consequences for falling prey to the evil woman.
7:1-27	7:1a “My son”	7:1-5 Initial Statement: Positive (7:1) Initial Argument: Elaboration (7:2-4) Restatement: The woman (7:5)	7:6-23 The drama of seduction: 1. The scene (7:6-13) -a young man (7:6-9) -a woman (7:10-13) 2. The speech (7:14-20) 3. Denouement (7:21-23)	7:24-27 Restatement of Proposition: Positive (7:24) Negative (7:25) Final Appeal: Negative (7:26- 27)	Low	Positive: Promises Narrative Tension Negative: Consequences for falling prey to the strange woman.

B. Implications of Rhetorical Variety within Subsets

What is the significance of three distinct subsets of lectures, each containing speeches with diverse rhetorical strategies? Put simply, what best accounts for the rhetoric of the father in Proverbs 1-9? One might contend that the father's rhetoric is the result of happenstance. The editor collected three different types of lectures/instructions that coincidentally contained different rhetorical strategies. I shall maintain, however, that another hypothesis offers a more viable explanation. The editor or author of the ten lectures had both rhetorical sensitivity and the goal of rhetorical education.

First, it seems reasonable to credit: the editor or author of the ten lectures with keen rhetorical sensitivity.⁴ What distinguishes these speeches from one another is their rhetoric: three distinct subsets of lectures with diverse members, ten speeches with ten different rhetorical strategies. These chapters constitute a striking rhetorical anthology that seems less likely to be the fortuitous result of haphazard collecting than the product of careful rhetorical discernment and selection. Granted, as Kennedy claims, there is no evidence (yet) of the conceptualization of rhetorical theory in ancient Israel.⁵ This dissertation proposes, however, that the remarkable collection of

⁴ It makes little or no difference whether the lectures are the product of a single author or the collection of an editor. The diverse rhetorical situations envisioned by the speeches (e.g., sometimes ethos is a problem, other times not), does seem to favor multiple authorship. Thus, henceforth, I tentatively refer to the ten lectures as an anthology collected by an editor.

⁵ Kennedy (*Classical Rhetoric*, 120) explains, "The rhetoric of the Old Testament is preconceptual. Although, as in the Homeric poems, there are many speeches and examples of oral and written literary forms, there is no passage which analyzes the nature, purpose, and forms of speech."

lectures in Proverbs 1-9 does present evidence for self-conscious rhetorical reflection in ancient Israel.⁶

Second, if the collection of ten lectures in Proverbs 1-9 is the result of rhetorical sensitivity, what editorial purpose(s) lay beneath this collection? In other words, why compile these three subsets with diverse members? One may posit at least two reasons. First, the three problems addressed by the lectures may have been such pressing concerns that, in the editor's opinion, each issue required not one, but several different speeches. Thus, the editor presents four different calls to apprenticeship, three calls to remember and obey, and three warnings against illicit sexual relations, each with different arguments. Second, this collection may be the result of an attempt to provide rhetorical models for different rhetorical needs or situations. For example, the first subset provides four diverse examples of how a rhetor may gain the attention and receptivity of his audience. Similarly, the second subset of lectures contains three different ways of reminding an audience of disparate teaching and urging their compliance. The third subset also furnishes three model speeches that develop a single theme. In other words, the collection of ten lectures in Proverbs 1-9 may serve the purpose of rhetorical education by providing exemplary speeches for basic types of rhetoric and rhetorical problems.

Although new, this hypothesis of the lectures functioning in rhetorical education is consistent with a long standing theory regarding the compositional history

⁶ This claim of self-conscious rhetorical reflection stands against Kennedy's (*Classical Rhetoric*, 120) assertion that "rhetorical consciousness is entirely foreign to the nature of biblical Judaism." Also against Kennedy, see Crenshaw, "Wisdom and Authority," 10-29.

of Proverbs 1-9. A number of scholars, most recently Fox, have argued persuasively that the original core of these chapters was the ten lectures to which the five interludes were later added.⁷ Thus, many scholars acknowledge that the ten lectures originally constituted a "Book of Ten Discourses"⁸ that was used in an educational setting as 1) a practice text for writing, and 2) moral indoctrination.⁹ To be sure, some object to this historical reconstruction, primarily because of the thematic repetitiveness and apparent redundancy in the speeches. As Whybray asserts, "It is extremely unlikely that there

⁷ Fox ("Ideas of Wisdom," 615-616) distinguishes two major strata in Proverbs 1-9, namely, ten lectures and five interludes (1:20-33, 3:13-20, 6:1-19, 8:1-36, and 9:1-18) and argues that the interludes are a later stratum inserted into the series of lectures. Fox explains his method:

To identify historical strata in a literary work, we must first form a profile - conceptual, literary, and linguistic - of material that clearly belongs to one strata. Then we ask whether the other material fits this profile. To be sure, a single author can introduce variety in a unified work, but at some point the differences become prominent enough to indicate diverse origins, and that is the case here. The interludes and the lectures differ in their conceptual and literary characteristics. Linguistic differences (other than those determined by theme) are not evident. (616)

Thus, Fox identifies five conceptual or literary differences between the lectures and the interludes that demonstrate that the interludes are a later stratum. 1) The concept of wisdom in the lectures (it resides within people) is different from wisdom in the interludes (it transcends the human mind). 2) The consistent literary schema of the lectures is disturbed by the five dissimilar interludes. 3) Although the lectures were written by the same author, inconsistencies in the interludes suggest that they were not written by a single author. 4) The interludes cohere as a group, not only in their concept of personified wisdom, but in some unusual motifs. 5) The interludes appear to be outgrowths of the lectures. Thus, "we can picture the process of growth as a series of insertions by scribes learning from and building on the lectures rather than as a compilation and reorganization of unrelated texts by a redactor" (618). See also, Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 51.

⁸ Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 51. More recently, Whybray has rejected his earlier claim that the lectures constituted a book. See below.

⁹ So Lang, *Die weisheitliche Lehrrede*, 101-102.

should have been such repetition in the practical handbook.”¹⁰ Rhetorical analysis, however, resolves this lacuna in the hypothesis and proposes a third purpose for the collection. Why would an editor select or collect these seemingly redundant lectures? Put simply, the editor selected these speeches on the basis of their rhetorical type and strategy. As the foregoing rhetorical analysis has demonstrated, these speeches may appear repetitive, but they are rhetorically diverse. Thus, this dissertation posits another purpose for the Book of the Ten Lectures, namely, teaching students basic rhetorical strategies and forms.

At first glance, the present order of the ten lectures appears to stand against my hypothesis that the lectures served as a handbook for rhetorical education. Proverbs 1-9 begins with two calls to apprenticeship (1:8-19 and 2:1-22), continues with two calls to remember and obey (3:1-12 and 3:21-35), takes up two additional calls to apprenticeship (4:1-9 and 4:10-19), and concludes with a final call to remember and obey (4:20-27) before presenting the three warnings against illicit sexual relations (5:1-23, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27). Thus, while the editor does set apart the members of the third subset, the first two subsets are intermingled. This lack of distinct order, however, is typical of ancient Near Eastern instructional literature. As Lang has pointed out, Egyptian Instructions are loose collections of materials without unified redactional plans.¹¹ The lack of clear redactional ordering of the lectures, therefore, is characteristic of the genre.

¹⁰ Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 28.

¹¹ Lang, *Die weisheitliche Lehrrede*, 28, 100.

I propose, then, that the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9 not only demonstrate the presence of formal rhetorical interests in ancient Israel, but that the initial collection of these lectures formed a book devised, in part, to serve the purposes of rhetorical education. This hypothesis is congruent with the present scholarly consensus regarding the compositional history of Proverbs 1-9 and, in my opinion, best accounts for the remarkable collection of different types of lectures in these chapters.

C. Areas for Further Research

The goal of this dissertation has been to present a sustained rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures and, thus, fill a lacuna in present scholarship. The hypotheses of self-conscious rhetorical thought in ancient Israel and the ten lectures as a rhetorical handbook are only a tentative attempt to account for the data revealed by my rhetorical analyses. Further research is required to confirm both of these hypotheses and consider their broader implications for our understanding of rhetoric in ancient Israel.

To begin, sustained rhetorical analyses of other biblical texts promises to further our understanding of rhetoric in ancient Israel. Such study is already finding good results in the work of such scholars as Gitay¹² and Fox,¹³ but modern scholars are only standing at the threshold of this investigation. Research into education in ancient

¹² E.g. *Prophecy and Persuasion: A Study of Isaiah 40-48*, Forum Theologicae Linguisticae 14 (Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1981); "Jonah: The Prophecy of Antirhetoric," in *Fortunate the Eyes That See*, ed. by A. Beck, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 197-206; "Psalm 1 and the Rhetoric of Religious Argumentation," in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible*, edited by L.J. de Regt, J. de Waard, and J.P. Fokkelman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 232-240.

¹³ "The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones," 1-15; "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 233-243; "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," 613-633.

Israel also needs to be pursued, but with a greater awareness of rhetoric.¹⁴ Put simply, where and how were rhetors in ancient Israel (e.g., prophets, sages, courtiers) taught to speak persuasively?

In addition to these general fields of inquiry, further investigation of three specific topics may make a direct contribution to our understanding of the father's rhetoric in Proverbs 1-9. First, rhetorical education in ancient Greece and Rome included not only theoretical handbooks, but collections of sample speeches, the Progymnasmata. The Progymnasmata provided patterns for students to follow in the composition of their own speeches.¹⁵ Might the Book of the Ten Lectures be analogous to ancient Greco-Roman Progymnasmata? This question merits careful study. To be sure, the analogy may be far from exact and culturally limited, but comparative study of the ten lectures and the Progymnasmata seems a promising route for exploring rhetorical consciousness and education in ancient Israel.

Second, in his most recent monograph, *Comparative Rhetoric*, Kennedy has proposed that a text similar in both form and content to The Book of the Ten Lectures,

¹⁴ Cf. Weeks' (*Early Israelite Wisdom*, 159) claim that "Thus, for all the sayings about the importance of speech, there is no instruction on *how* to speak well; nor, for that matter, is there even any description of what constitutes 'righteousness'. Proverbs moralizes, and encourages its readers to pursue certain ideals or patterns of behaviour, but assumes that they will know about them already. Nobody seeking rhetorical skill, a precise knowledge of etiquette, or almost any practical ability, would turn to the wisdom literature, which is at best sporadically helpful in such matters." If accepted, the hypothesis presented above, namely, that The Book of the Ten Lectures functioned as a rhetorical handbook, overturns Week's negative conclusion.

¹⁵ On the collection and use of model speeches in ancient Greece and Rome, see D.L. Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957): 144-212.

the Egyptian *Instruction of Ptahhotep*, may be "regarded as the oldest known rhetorical handbook."¹⁶ Kennedy's claim for *Ptahhotep* is based on its explicit concerns for eloquent speech ("instructing the ignorant in knowledge and in the standard of excellent discourse"), a concern that McKane also has identified in other Egyptian Instructions, such as *Merikare*, *Duauf*, and *Onchsheshonqy*.¹⁷ Thus, it appears possible that at least some of the ancient Near Eastern Instruction literature may have served as rhetorical handbooks. This possibility deserves further investigation. Scholars widely acknowledge that ancient Near Eastern, especially Egyptian, Instruction literature directly influenced Proverbs. Hence, if some or many non-biblical Instruction texts functioned as rhetorical handbooks, might the Book of the Ten Lectures have served the same purpose in ancient Israel?

Third, the editor(s) responsible for the present form of Proverbs 1-9 may have, in fact, acknowledged the rhetorical intentions of the Book of the Ten Lectures. The crucial evidence in this matter is the meaning of the Hebrew noun קֶלֶל . Studies of קֶלֶל do occur in scholarly literature.¹⁸ Further study is required, however, in view of the possible rhetorical goals of the ten lectures revealed by this dissertation. For example, קֶלֶל occurs six times in the book of Proverbs (1:5, 4:2, 7:21, 9:9, 16:21,

¹⁶ Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 128.

¹⁷ McKane, *Proverbs*, 51-118. Other non-biblical instructions exhibit concern for rash and unrestrained speech, but not rhetorical craftsmanship. See McKane's discussion of the Egyptian Instructions of *Ani* (92) and *Amenemope* (104), the Babylonian *Counsels of Wisdom* (153-154), and the Assyrian *Ahikar* (163, 166-67).

¹⁸ E.g., G.J. Botterwick, H. Ringgren, and H. Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. VIII, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), s.v., " קֶלֶל ," by H. Seebass, 16-21.

16:23). In 16:21, 23, and 7:21, **לְקַל** appears to mean "persuasiveness" or "eloquence."

The wise of heart is called perceptive,
and pleasant speech increases persuasiveness (**לְקַל**). (16:21, NRSV)

The mind of the wise makes their speech judicious,
and adds persuasiveness (**לְקַל**) to their lips. (16:23, NRSV)

She swayed him by the profuseness of her persuasiveness (**לְקַל**). (7:21)

These texts suggest that the meaning of **לְקַל** in Proverbs may reflect the notion of "rhetoric" as the power of persuasion.¹⁹

In view of the foregoing rhetorical analysis, the possibility that **לְקַל** may denote rhetoric or persuasive speech is of great significance. An editor of Proverbs 1-9 frames the ten lectures with two statements: "Let the wise also hear and gain in **לְקַל** (1:5) and "Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they will gain **לְקַל**" (9:9).²⁰ If further research can establish the meaning of **לְקַל** as persuasion or eloquent speech, then one might conclude that the editor of Proverbs 1-9 explicitly identifies rhetorical training as one purpose of the ten lectures. The editor urges the wise and righteous to listen to instructions so that they may learn how to be more effective teachers or persuasive rhetors (**לְקַל**).

¹⁹ The standard lexicons recognize this possible understanding of **לְקַל**. KB (486) defines **לְקַל** as 1) teaching, 2) persuasiveness, or 3) understanding. Holladay (*A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 179) nuances KB's second translation from "persuasiveness" to "the gift of persuasion."

²⁰ The other occurrence of **לְקַל** in Proverbs (4:2b) does not oppose this meaning. Here, the rhetor urges the son not to abandon his **לְקַל**, his teaching or rhetoric.

The recent renewal of rhetorical interest in biblical texts has opened a new and productive interpretive avenue into the ten lectures of Proverbs 1-9. This dissertation has ventured down this new path in an attempt to understand and account for the father's rhetoric. Continued exploration of this dimension of Proverbs 1-9 will require further research into rhetoric and rhetorical education in ancient Israel, investigation of the specific topics mentioned above, and scholarly response and refinement of the rhetorical analysis of the ten lectures offered by this dissertation. Hopefully, the individual analyses presented here and the recognition of three rhetorical types of lectures with diverse members will provide a helpful foundation for other, more far-reaching, studies of the rhetoric of father in Proverbs 1-9.

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