THE SOVEREIGNTY OF YAHWEH IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS
AN EXERCISE IN THEOLOGICAL EXEGESIS

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For the duration of this century, the Old Testament in
general (and Wisdom Literature in particular) has been vir-
tually the private property of a particular ideology. The
ideology in question is not, to be sure, a pure monolith;
rather, it may be envisioned as a multi-story building, con-
taining in its superstructure many floors and departments--
but all united in one building. Due to the lamentable lack
of a more suitable term, we may style this edifice "the
liberal approach" or, more simply, "liberalism."

The approach is characterized by a rationalistic orien-
tation toward the Bible, as a result of which all statements
contained therein are essentially considered to be "in the
dock" until their veracity might be verified, and that on
the terms fixed by the individual investigator. Accord-
ingly, canonical claims of authorship are not considered
binding to any appreciable degree; nor are historical nar-
ratives granted as much as the benefit of a doubt unless
verified by an external criterion.

As will be noted frequently in the ensuing investiga-
tion, these methodological presuppositions and predilections
exercise a profound effect on the manner in which Wisdom
Literature is approached and handled. The liberal approach

has been allowed to hold the day due in part to the shameful abnegation of responsibility on the part of those who, like the writer, adhere to what may be labeled the "conservative approach." This approach is characterized in a rather starkly contrasting way by a consistently receptive attitude toward the data of the canonical text, whether those data center about matters of authorship or of history. Lamentably, the energies of adherents to this position have not been focused upon the Old Testament in any concentrated way until comparatively recently. As a result, most of the scholarly material treating of more specialized Old Testament subjects (as, in the present case, Wisdom Literature) has been generated by practitioners of the liberal approach.

Problem of the Alienation of Wisdom Literature

In speaking of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament, one denotes especially the books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and several of the Psalms. Particularly apposite is the comment of Crenshaw that Wisdom Literature "knows the fickleness of scholarship."[1] Indeed, at the earlier part of this century and for some decades afterwards it was fashionable to claim as a matter of general knowledge the opinion that Wisdom Literature comprised something of a foreign presence in the Old Testament.[2] Reasons for this

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[1] James L. Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," in his *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, The Library of Biblical Studies (New York: KTAV, 1976), p. 3.

[2] Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," p. 2.

assessment will be examined and evaluated at greater length in Chapter Two, wherein it will be noted that the theological perspective of Wisdom Literature is often seen as being diverse from that of the rest of the Old Testament canon, due not merely to a different concentration or emphasis in subject matter, but to a divergent (or even hostile)[3] theology.

This alienation of Wisdom in the perceptions of academicians results in a peculiar handling of the contents of Wisdom books. A resultant constellation of varied reconstructions is witnessed in the writings of liberal scholars. Perhaps the greatest single reason for the diversity in reconstruction is to be located in the authors' handling of introductory matters. Cavalierly dismissing the canonical indications concerning authorship and dating of the various Wisdom documents, the liberal writers are almost absolutely free of any objective controls, as a result of which state of affairs any number of evolutionary reconstructions are superimposed upon the text of Scripture. The writer will argue that this quagmire of subjectivism may be circumnavigated--on the condition that the investigator take the data of the text with due seriousness and respect.

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[3] See, for example, James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: an Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), p. 209 f.

*Conservative Solution to the Alienation
of Wisdom Literature*

In the opinion of the writer, scholars who do not avail themselves of the data of the Old Testament text are as it were cutting off their own legs in terms of any truly fruitful investigation. Although the prospect of recreating the rise and significance of a movement such as the putative "wisdom movement" using in the most part only the building blocks supplied by one's own creative imagination is an exhilarating proposition, it will be argued in this thesis that the conservative approach is far more productive and far more genuinely satisfying.

The ensuing discussion will block out a *methodology* for approaching the task of the theological exegesis of the book of Proverbs (as a chief representative of Wisdom Literature), utilizing largely (if not solely) the objective guidelines provided in the text of Scripture itself. This methodological discussion will comprise the first part of the investigation. Here we will show the manner in which Proverbs should be handled as an organic and integral part of the Old Testament revelation.

The second division will embody an *application* of this method to the theological exegesis of representative passages in the book of Proverbs which assert the sovereignty of the Lord Yahweh. Here will be seen a sample of the fruitful results which can grow out of a proper regard for and treatment of Proverbs as part of God's abiding word to mankind.

PART I

Approaching Theological Exegesis

CHAPTER TWO

Theological Exegesis

The contents of the Old Testament obviously represent themselves as laden with theological import. They are not mere statistical tables or historical notes meant to enlighten succeeding generations. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement of the case to observe that even the statistics and the historical sections of Scripture are intended to serve a revelatory and theological purpose. As Geerhardus Vos observes, "The process of revelation is not only concomitant with history, but it becomes incarnate in history. The facts of history themselves acquire a revealing significance."[1]

In keeping with the theological nature of the text of the Bible, one must examine the original terminology of Scripture in a manner which does justice to the theological intent and content of the sacred word. In thus doing, one must avoid the Scylla of a dry, technical and untheological dissection of the text, as well as the Charybdis of a fanciful manipulation of Scripture so as to inject one or more cherished (but inappropriate) concepts. A closer

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[1] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 6.

examination of the practice of theological exegesis is therefore a desideratum.

Practice of Theological Exegesis

In fairness to the text of Scripture, one must give due recognition to its theological intent and content. One may not securely proffer any assessments of either factor without some knowledge of a number of considerations. Leaving aside the obvious matters (such as the use of the original languages, etc.), one must endeavor to enter into the mindset of the inspired writer of Scripture to the greatest possible degree. This is perhaps one of the chief areas of difficulty: the temptation to read one's own *Weltanschauung* into the text. It is difficult not to read a given Old Testament text through New Testament spectacles, given the modern reader's advantage of seeing ancient Israelite events and credenda in the light of the full picture provided by subsequent revelation. The consequence of such a practice is the attributing of distinctively Christian concepts to pre-Christian writers, resulting in a failure to appreciate the intrinsically valuable content of pristine Old Testament revelation.

In the writer's view, the most important hermeneutical consideration in this regard is what Kaiser calls the "Analogy of Antecedent Scripture."[2] Elaborating on this

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[2] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 18.

theme, Kaiser observes that

> the Analogy of Scripture strictly limits its use to
> that build-up of the core of faith which temporally
> and historically *preceded* the text under investi-
> gation. . . . [it] is inductive and collects only
> those antecedent *contexts* which were in the Scripture
> writer's mind as he wrote this new passage as indi-
> cated by the same terminology, formulas, or events
> to which this context adds another in the series.[3]

One might wish to expand Kaiser's conditions for the deter-
mination of appropriate antecedent texts to include those
scriptural data which one may know from other indications to
be accessible (and very probably known) to the writer. For
an illustrative example, the possession of a California
driver's license would create the presumption that the
bearer had, at some time, read the California Driver's Hand-
book--whether or not the individual reflected this acquain-
tance by terminology or formulae.[4] Thus, although Kaiser's
principle is not exhaustive,[5] it does provide a corrective
and objective control in the determination of the meaning
which should be assigned to the texts of Scripture.

It will be readily perceived at this juncture that
introductory matters come to be of paramount importance.
The only objective manner in which we may determine the

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[3] Kaiser, *Toward an O. T. Theology*, pp. 18-19.

[4] For example, it will be contended below that Penta-
teuchal legislation mandated Solomon's familiarity with the
Torah.

[5] That is, New Testament texts should be allowed to
illuminate or amplify problematic Old Testament texts--but
they must not be employed to determine the thinking of the
earlier writer unless they clearly indicate such an intent.

informing theology of a given text involves the examination of those documents which we may properly hold to have been in existence and available to the writer of the section to be examined. As Kaiser further states, "It is this [antecedent] theology which 'informs' the text and supplies the background against which this new revelation was given."[6] Indeed, Kaiser goes so far as to speak of the utilization of subsequent Old Testament texts or of New Testament passages in the interpretive process as "an outright act of rebellion against the author."[7]

How may we determine which texts provide the informing theology for the passage which is to be analyzed? It is at this point, obviously, that the student must engage in the task of the investigation of introductory studies, arriving at the most assured conclusions which one may attain concerning the date of composition of the books of the Old Testament.

Here the researcher who is of the conservative tradition has an inestimable advantage over the liberal investigator. Whereas the latter lacks objective controls due to his *a priori* dismissal of the textual indications as to date and authorship (where such exist),[8] the former accepts such

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[6] Kaiser, *Toward an O. T. Theology*, p. 19.
[7] Kaiser, *Toward an O. T. Theology*, p. 19.
[8] Cf. Donn Morgan, *Wisdom in the Old Testament Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), who attributes the confusion in Wisdom studies partly to what his liberal

biblical indications as can be ascertained from the Bible
with any degree of certainty. This diversity of approach
and orientation in the two schools of thought calls for
further examination.

Difficulties in Theological Exegesis

Diverse Dating Systems

The first and perhaps most obvious difficulty centers
about the area of determining the dates of the documents.
Generally committed to an evolutionary and naturalistic his-
toriography, liberal writers tend to date books of the Bible
as late as possible, disregarding textual claims to author-
ship (including New Testament data, where available).
Liberal dating of the book of Proverbs ranges from the
admission that some individual proverbs may date from Solo-
mon's time[9] to the position that the book reached its final
form in the second century B.C.[10] More conservative writers
view the Solomonic proverbs as coming from the king of the
same name. An even greater divergence may be witnessed in

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orientation compels him to term "[t]he absence of easily
datable texts and explicit connections with other tradi-
tions[, which] makes it necessary for surmise" (p. 17). The
conservative finds no such "absence" and, accordingly, no
such necessity.

[9] Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: an Introduction,*
trans. Peter Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965),
p. 476.

[10] Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commen-
tary on the Book of Proverbs,* ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T.
Clark, 1899), p. xxx.

the dating of other books. As will be argued in the follow-

ing chapter, the student believes that the solution lies in

the acceptance of the *prima facie* evidence of Scripture.

Isolation of Wisdom Literature

As noted above, some scholars view Proverbs and the

other Wisdom books as representing an alien presence in the

Old Testament, bearing only a slight relation to Mosaism (if

any relation at all is granted). Writers of this perspec-

tive form something of a spectrum of vantage points.

The common observation which forms the basis for this

rather negative assessment of the role of the Wisdom writ-

ings is concisely stated by Zimmerli: "Wisdom has no

relation to the history between God and Israel."[11] Crenshaw

states the case more fully:

> Within Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes one looks
> in vain for the dominant themes of Yahwistic thought:
> the exodus from Egypt, election of Israel, the Davidic
> covenant, the Mosaic legislation, the patriarchal nar-
> ratives, the divine control of history and movement
> toward a glorious moment when right will triumph.
> Instead, the reader encounters in these three books
> *a different thought world.*[12]

The manner in which academicians respond, to this puta-

tive "different thought world" varies considerably. Some

would simply agree with Norman K. Gottwald in evaluating

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[11] Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of the Wisdom
in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *Scottish
Journal of Theology*, 17 (1964), p. 147. "This is an aston-
ishing fact," Zimmerli adds (p. 147).

[12] James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: an Intro-
duction* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), p. 29.

Proverbs as "a potpourri of sayings and short poems, gener-
ally mediocre as literature, tedious as ethics, banal as
religion."[13] Stressing the ethical emphasis of Proverbs and
other Wisdom books, such scholars would see theology as a
minor aspect.[14] Scott allows for the presence of theology
in the writings of the Old Testament, but denies that the
theology is systematic (as opposed to being merely
implied).[15]

Another line of approach is adopted by those scholars
who see the conceptual and ideological orientation of Prov-
erbs and other Wisdom books as being positively hostile to
its canonical environment. A singularly uncharitable eval-
uation is provided by H. D. Preuss, whose reaction to the
apparent absence of *Heilsgeschichte* in Proverbs is to rele-
gate it to the mass of heathen writings which proffer no
positive inspiration.[16] Somewhat less extreme but definitely

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[13] Norman K. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations* (New
York: Harper & Bros., 1959), p. 472, cited by John Mark
Thompson, *The Form and Function of Proverbs in Ancient
Israel* (Paris: Mouton, 1974), p. 7.

[14] For example, there is almost no discussion of theol-
ogy proper in James Wood, *Wisdom Literature*, Studies in
Theology (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1967).

[15] R. B. Y. Scott, "The Study of Wisdom Literature,"
Interpretation, 24, No. 1 (1970), 39.

[16] H. D. Preuss, "Erwägungen zum theologischen Ort
alttestamentlicher Weisheitsliteratur," *Evangelische Theol-
ogie* 30 (1970) 393-417, and "Das Gottesbild der älteren
Weisheit Israels," *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 23 (1972),
117-45, cited by James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*,
p. 245.

negative in his assessment is James Crenshaw, who sees Wisdom literature as being opposed to Yahwism. Crenshaw asserts that the Wisdom writers "offered an alternative mode of interpreting reality to the Yahwistic one in which God was actively involved in guiding history toward a worthy goal."[17] He further holds that the concept of Yahweh's regal, sovereignly electing relationship to Israel embodies a viewpoint that "is wholly alien to the sapiential one."[18] In a rather similar vein, Bryce insisted that Wisdom writings were foreign to the law and the prophets, with wholly different premises.[19] He further argued that all attempts to unite Wisdom Literature with the law and the prophets are "vitiated" by "the total lack of religious premises necessary for such literature."[20]

Something of an impasse is, accordingly, to be expected. Liberal scholars are faced with a mass of literature which they regard as distinctive in its outlook, diverse from Mosaism in its faith tenets (and yet somehow within the body of Israel's literature), and unfathomable in terms of its

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[17] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, p. 208. Crenshaw titles this section "A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO YAHWISM," and remarks in addition that "the beauty of this view is that it makes no claim about divine control of history. . . . Religious claims, were modest ones" (p. 209).

[18] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, p. 208.

[19] Glendon E. Bryce, *A Legacy of Wisdom* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1979), p. 206.

[20] Bryce, p. 206. The book does not mention Prov. i.7.

origins. Not without resources, the scholars have plied
their considerable abilities in a studious endeavor to make
sense of this body of literary materials, resulting in a
rather bewildering array of theories, ranging from the views
noted above to the somewhat exotic multi-level reconstruc-
tion invented by William McKane.[21] Nevertheless, the
impasse stands, occasioning the (to put the best face on it)
unfortunate result that the various portions of the Old
Testament are bifurcated (or, if one may proffer a neologism,
polyfurcated) into just so many essentially unrelated shards
of purely human notions.

Is this impasse unavoidable, simply one of those hard
realities like the proverbial "death and taxes" couplet, to
which one must accommodate oneself? It is the writer's con-
viction that such is not the case.

Toward a Solution

If the student of Scripture is to open this door which
has been locked by decades of unproductive methodologies, he
must utilize two keys. The first key involves the rejection
of alleged "levels" of Wisdom; the second key calls for the
recognition of Wisdom Literature's links with the covenantal
faith and community.

Rejection of Diverse "Levels"

Many scholars (notably McKane, in more recent times)

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[21] William McKane, *Proverbs*, OTL (Philadelphia: West-
minster, 1970), especially pp. 10-22.

have argued that Proverbs (in common with Wisdom Literature generally, in their view) consists of distinct strata. The older strata are secular and practical; the later strata are Yahwistic. As a matter of course, no unified theology can be drawn from Proverbs, nor can Proverbs fit into any truly unified picture of Old Testament faith--for no such unified faith exists.

This thesis, however, has been weighed and found wanting. As a general principle, Morgan observes that "it is usually the case that major traditions in any culture are interrelated,"[22] so that an artificial series of divisions is not warranted. Further, Morgan notes that the (so-called) wisdom influence is detectable in texts which are not generally classified as "wisdom texts." He further observes that this phenomenon

> does not therefore witness to a combination of two or more epistemologically and theologically separable traditions. On the contrary, it points to a way of theologizing which utilized many different perspectives in an effort to find the common, Yahwistic matrix or thread behind all experience.[23]

Similarly, Waltke affirms that "a distinction cannot be established between an older, profane, and secular wisdom and a younger so-called distinctively Israelite strain of wisdom which transformed and supplemented the former."[24] One may readily concur with the judgment of Thompson that

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[22] Morgan, p. 21. [23] Morgan, p. 26.
[24] Bruce K. Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and Old Testament Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 136, No. 544 (1979), 303.

the insistence upon seeing Wisdom Literature as "a late addendum to the religion of Israel and not characteristic of Hebraic thought" is indeed a "shabby treatment."[25] No facile separation between theological and non-theological Wisdom traditions in the process of Israelite history can be supported.[26] Even Crenshaw, whose critical approach is in many respects at loggerheads with that propounded herein, admits that piety is "edited" into all the strata "so thoroughly that the additions can only be removed by sheer conjecture. Or the person who opts for secular wisdom must be compelled grudgingly to admit that it never in fact existed."[27] We would differ from Crenshaw in suggesting that the presence of Israelite piety had nothing to do with any editing process, but was inherent in the world-views of the sages.

Perhaps some of the confusion in the analyses of writers stems from the purpose and approach of Proverbs and other Wisdom Literature. Scholars of a more liberal slant insist that "the wisdom seeker must rely entirely on his

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[25] Thompson, p. 96.

[26] Morgan, pp. 55, 145. Morgan also remarks that Wisdom "is from the beginning an integral, inseparable part of Israel's self expression and theological witness" (p. 55).

[27] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, p. 92. "It follows that wisdom contained a religious element from the beginning" (Crenshaw, p. 92).

natural equipment."[28] The truths presented in Proverbs are thought to be "self-evident intuitions"[29] beginning with human viewpoint and the assumption that life's problems may all be solved by truths culled sheerly from experience.[30] The tacit assumption in these evaluations seems to be that reason and revelation may be neatly dichotomized.

This sort of distinction, however, is not desirable. As Morgan aptly comments, this sort of polarization is

> not a step forward from archaic biblical world-views, but rather an impediment to the doing of theology, which takes seriously all the dimensions of our experience.[31]

In addition, one must assume the irrelevance of a number of textual indications (chiefly Proverbs' internal claims to authorship) if one is to support the bifurcation outlined above--which assumption is not granted by conservatives.

Perhaps many of the difficulties in the supposed variance in Proverbs' outlook may be ameliorated if one appreciates the purpose of the book. The text itself informs readers that Proverbs is designed to instill such principles as are necessary for attaining success in godly living (Prov. i.1-6). This practical emphasis is based firmly upon

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[28] J. Coert Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1946), p. 667. Cf. Crenshaw, p. 67: "All proverbs . . . were grounded in experience."

[29] Crenshaw, *O. T. Wisdom*, p. 19.

[30] Crenshaw, *O. T. Wisdom*, p. 18.

[31] Morgan, p. 29.

a Yahwistic principle which is thematic for the book (Prov. i.7; cf. ix.10; xxii.19). This practical counsel operates from a "*supernatural assumption*."[32] As Oehler puts it, Wisdom Literature's

> mode of procedure . . . is to endeavor, by means of that key of knowledge which revelation affords, better to understand God's ways in the world, and, through the knowledge of God's will furnished by the law, better to determine the duties of human life.[33]

Due to this purpose, no need existed for a frequent reference to the various details of the cultus, nor to facets of Israel's history. Of course, there is no real indication that any antipathy towards the cultus can be found in Proverbs.[34]

Many indications of the unity of Proverbs' faith-viewpoint and that of the rest of antecedent Scripture may be easily detected.

*Recognition of Links with the
    Covenant Faith and Community*

Authorship. The first, most obvious (and yet most frequently overlooked or discounted) indicator of unity with

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[32] Gustav Friederich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Amer. ed. George E. Day (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978 [rpt.]), p. 538.

[33] Oehler, p. 538.

[34] Oehler, p. 383. "Such a notion is at variance with the fact that Solomon, who built the temple and gave completeness to the ritual of worship, stands at the head of these men [*viz*., the sages of Israel]."

antecedent revelation is found in the fact that King Solomon authored the first twenty-nine chapters of the work.[35] This king was a monarch under Yahweh, sired by a deeply devoted Yahwist, involved deeply in the worship of Yahweh, and schooled in the law of Yahweh. In the fact of Solomonic authorship lies one of the most exciting veins for explanation due chiefly to two considerations.

The *first* consideration concerns Solomon's relationship to the law of Yahweh given through Moses. According to Deut. xvii.18-19,

> Now it shall come about when he [the king] sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear [Yahweh] his God,[36] by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes (*NASB*).

This legal injunction was reinforced by its personal enunciation by Yahweh in Solomon's encounter with his Sovereign, as recorded in I Kings iii.l4. Here Yahweh exhorts the young king to walk in His ways, keeping His statutes and commandments, a charge echoed in Solomon's hymnic prayer (Ps. lxxii.1 f.). It is accordingly not surprising that numerous parallels between Deuteronomy and Proverbs have

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[35] This portion of the argument assumes the conclusions relating to date and authorship which are presented in the following chapter.

[36] Compare this phrase with the theme-verse of Solomon's pedagogic approach (Prov. i.7):

been noted.[37] In addition, Waltke cites the references in Proverbs to the sacred vow (xx.25; xxxi.2), sacred lots (xvi.33), and firstfruits (iii.9).[38] In a fascinating and helpful survey, Payne notes many parallels between the Decalogue and Proverbial ethics.[39] Ample evidence exists to indicate a close relationship between Proverbs and the law of Yahweh.[40]

The *second* consideration relates to David's influence upon his sagacious son. Solomon himself attests in Proverbs iv.3-4 that he was an attentive student to his father (King David), who charged young Solomon to hold fast to his father's teaching. This is in full keeping with the pattern of teaching enjoined in Proverbs (cf. i.8 ff.) and, more

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[37] Cf. Moshe Weinfeld, "The Wisdom Substrata in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic Literature," in *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), pp. 244-74, cited by Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and O. T. Theology,' p. 304. Waltke notes the following parallels: Deut. iv.2; xiii.1 and Prov. xxx.5-6; Deut. xix.14 and Prov. xxii.l0; and Deut. xxv.13-16 and Prov. xx.23.

[38] Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and O. T. Theology," p. 306. Waltke also says, "In short, although the wise men did not initiate the cultus, they assumed it" (p. 306).

[39] J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), pp. 338-44.

[40] The objective considerations adduced above are, however, of no value if one assumes with Crenshaw that "an impregnable mountain called Fantasy stands between biblical interpreters and the historical Solomon" (*O. T. Wisdom,* p. 44). In the view of the present writer, Crenshaw does not display an adequately self-critical consciousness of the veritable Fantasy Island onto which one of necessity steps when one casts aside the textual data, and begins to reconstruct history *de novo*.

importantly, with the injunctions of the law of Yahweh (cf. Deut. v.16; vi.6-9, etc.). We know from the historical record that the elder king commanded his son concerning the law of Yahweh in the most precise tones:

> And keep the charge of [Yahweh] your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn (I Kings ii.2 *NASB*).

These data establish the necessity of exploring the law of Yahweh for the informing theology of Proverbs. The data also counter the exclamation of Zimmerli (noted above in footnote 11) concerning the "astonishing fact" that Wisdom is unrelated to Israel's history. Indeed, the astonishing fact is that scholarship has ignored the book's claim to Solomonic authorship, and has thus skated past a wrought-iron linkage with the history of Israel.

The use of the name "Yahweh." Also significant for the linkage of Proverbs with antecedent Old Testament revelation is the occurrence of the name "Yahweh," found so frequently and prominently in the book.[41] It should never be forgotten that Yahweh is the *personal* name of Israel's God; all other appellations are titles.[42] False deities could be

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[41] Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and O. T. Theology," p. 305. Waltke notes that the proportion of usage of יהוה to אֱלֹהִים is about the same in Deuteronomy and Proverbs.

[42] This consideration may be contrasted with the confident (and bewildering) assertion that "the attentive reader who is versed in the history of religion" will see that

inappropriately called by the generic word אֱלֹהִים, but would
not be called יהוה --for the latter is replete with that
specificity which the former lacks. When one speaks of
Yahweh, one *eo ipso* indicates the God who has entered into
personal relationship with the nation of Israel by means of
covenant and promise. As Waltke affirms,

> Yahweh is God's covenantal name, and by using
> this name the sages present themselves as teachers
> within Yahweh's covenant community even though they
> never mention Israel or the covenant. In short, the
> sages present themselves as spokesmen for the same
> God who encountered Israel though Moses and the
> prophets that succeeded him.[43]

If one should encounter literature making frequent use of
names such as Ahura Mazda, Shiva, Kali, or Zeus, one would
thereby derive some knowledge of the religious orientation
of the writer. It is so in the case of Proverbs.

In a similar manner, the use of the significant phrase
יִרְאַת יהוה (Prov. i.7; ix.10, etc.) is of value for connect-
ing Proverbs to antecedent Scripture. As Crenshaw himself
notes, the phrase connotes the laws and statutes of Yahweh,
and all other covenantal obligations.[44]

Prominence of the same doctrine. Proverbs presents the

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generic terms such as "God" or "deity" may be substituted
for "Yahweh" in Prov. i.7 without any problem (J. Alberto
Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* OTL, trans. John
Bowden [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976], pp. 379-80).

[43] Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and O. T. Theology,"
p. 305, emphases supplied.

[44] Crenshaw, *O. T. Wisdom*, p. 96.

same system of doctrine as that revealed in previous Scrip-
ture. Although, as Toombs points out, some writers have so
narrowly defined theology in terms of cultus and history
that they have automatically ruled out Proverbs' theological
contributions,[45] Solomon's doctrines do in fact harmonize
with the full picture of Old Testament theology. Proverbs
describes Yahweh in terms of the same character facets and
acts as those ascribed to Him in the law,[46] and propound the
same anthropology, the same epistemology, the same faith,
and the same hope, based on the same authority and making
the same ethical demands as those made in the law.[47]

Summary

The impasse in theological exegesis of Wisdom litera-
ture (and, more specifically, of Proverbs) can be broken if
one is willing to face the textual data receptively. Work-
ing with these data, one observes that Proverbs claims
Solomonic authorship, creating a presumption in favor of
the view that Proverbs is an outgrowth of revealed Yahwism.
This presumption is handily borne out by the evidence, which
indicates a harmonious relationship between Proverbs and the

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[45] Lawrence E. Toombs, "O. T. Theology and the Wisdom Literature," *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 23, No. 3 (1955), 195-96.

[46] Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and O. T. Theology," p. 304.

[47] Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and O. T. Theology," pp. 308-16.

covenant faith of Israel.[48] From the information culled out of antecedent Scripture, one may confidently carry out a theological exegesis of Proverbs. Accordingly, the next task shall involve the determination of which portions of the Bible form the needed antecedent Scripture which will inform the theology of Proverbs.

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[48] See also the discussion in D. A. Hubbard, "The Wisdom Movement and Israel's Covenant Faith," *Tyndale Bulletin*, No. 17 (1966), pp. 5 ff.

CHAPTER THREE

Laying the Groundwork

Having discussed the methodology for theological exege-
sis, as well as the qualifications for the data which inform
and control that exegesis, it now behooves the investigator
to make inquiry concerning the precise nature of the docu-
ments which provide background information for the texts
under consideration. Toward this end the writer will *very*
briefly outline his understanding of the identity of the
relevant writings, preceded by an overview and conclusion
regarding the date and authorship of the bulk of Proverbs.

Date and Authorship of Proverbs

Proverbs contains several explicit statements concern-
ing authorial identity (notably i.1; x.1; and xxv.1[1]). The
degree of seriousness with which one will treat these indi-
cations is largely dictated by one's epistemological and
methodological orientation. A liberal writer such as Toy
is sure that "no OT. [sic] titles are in themselves authori-
tative,"[2] and can readily dismiss the canonical evidence

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[1] The writer does not consider xxii.17 nor xxiv.23 to
be statements of authorship, due in large measure to the
recurrent singular verbs and pronomial suffixes (e.g.,
xxii.17, 19; xxiv.30).
[2] Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary
on the Book of Proverbs*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark,
1899), p. xix.

concerning Proverbs.[3] This essential procedure may also be
observed in the introduction of Sellin-Fohrer, wherein we
read about Proverbs that "it derives neither from Solomon
nor from Solomon's period."[4] Thus liberal introductions
either dismiss the textual indications entirely, or allow
that Solomon had a very limited role in the contents of the
book.[5]

By contrast, conservative introductions are fairly
unanimous in assigning at least Prov. x.l--xxii.16 to Solo-
mon.[6] The writer agrees with Unger in believing that "unless
we view the introduction i.1-7 as a later addition [which

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[3] Toy, p. xix ff.

[4] Ernst Sellin and Georg Fohrer, trans. David E. Green,
Introduction to the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon,
1968), p. 319.

[5] Cf. the following: Sellin-Fohrer; Brevard S. Childs,
Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia:
Fortress, 1979), pp. 545-59; Otto Eissfeldt, trans. Peter
R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row), 1965, pp. 470-77;
J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* OTL,
trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), pp.
383-85.

[6] Cf. the following: Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey
of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, rev. ed.
1974), pp. 465-74; C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to
the Poetic Books of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody,
1979), pp. 164-68; Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of
the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), p. 205;
Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 19697, pp. 1010-21; Karl Friedrich
Keil, *Manual of Historico-Critical Introduction to the
Canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., trans.
George C. M. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952 [rpt.]);
Merrill F.. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, rev. ed. 1956), pp. 372-74;
Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand
Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. ed. 1960.

the writer does not] . . . as even some conservatives unwar-
rantedly do, there is no reason for denying chapters 1-9, to
Solomon."[7] One could go a step further and assert that the
text gives *every* reason to believe that Solomon authored
i.1-x.1, so that one could agree with Bullock that not only
is the practice of denying Solomonic authorship to the first
nine chapters "not justified," but the fact that the general
editor(s) of Proverbs thought i.7-ix.18 to be Solomonic is
"beyond doubt."[8] Thus, this writer affirms the Solomonic
authorship of the first twenty-nine chapters of Proverbs.

Inasmuch as Proverbs xxv.1 speaks of "the men of Heze-
kiah" as the transcribers of xxv.1 ff., one could concur
with Harrison that the final form of the book was completed
during the reign of Hezekiah, thus between 716-687 B.C.[9] The
authorship and date of chapters 30 and 31 is problematic,
and for that reason those chapters will not be considered.
Thus, those texts which precede Solomon's tenth-century B.C.
reign will form the theological background for exegesis.

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[7] Unger, p. 373. For example, Harrison makes the odd
statement that x.l-xxii.16 is the "first principal group
of material attributed directly to King Solomon" (p. 1017).

[8] Bullock, p. 165. Cf. Archer, Keil, and Young.

[9] Harrison, p. 1018. Cf. Bullock, p. 162. Because no
more is known about the authors of chapters xxx and xxxi,
it would be difficult to date the chapters with anything
approaching certainty, or to proffer very definite opinions
concerning the informing theology known to the authors. For
these reasons, this thesis will concentrate upon the data
provided by the Solomonic chapters of Proverbs, chapters
i-xxix.

Identity of Antecedent Scriptures

The writer believes that five scriptural portions may be regarded with some confidence as being in existence by Solomon's time, and accordingly available to the sagacious sovereign. The writer's "bottom-line" understandings of the books' dates will be given below, with reference to conservative introductions for more full documentation and discussion.

Pentateuch[10]

Generally, conservative scholarship agrees on the basically Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch due to internal indications, New Testament confirmations, and indications within the Old Testament. As seen in I Kings ii.2, Solomon's father had enjoined his careful adherence to the law of Yahweh recorded by Moses, establishing a connection. The theology of the Pentateuch will be basic in understanding Solomon.

Joshua[11]

The book of Joshua gives evidence of the hand of an eyewitness[12] and was probably completed by 1045 B.C. at the latest.[13] Due to its continuative connection with the

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[10] See, especially Archer, pp. 105 ff., 165 ff., 179-262; Harrison, pp. 542-662; also standard introductions of Young, Keil, and Unger.

[11] See Harrison, p. 691; Archer, pp. 264 f.; Young, p. 163.

[12] Young, p. 163.   [13] Harrison, p. 673.

Pentateuch, it was probably also at Solomon's disposal.

Judges[14]

Internal indications evidence the authorship of Judges before the capture of Jerusalem by King David in 990 B.C.,[15] according to which fact the book would have been extant and (on the presumption of prompt recognition of its authority) known to the king of the covenant community.

Job[16]

This is the most problematic of the books in terms of determination of date or authorship. Guesses range from composition ca. 2100 B.C. (J. D. Michaelis [1787], G. W. Hazelton [1914], and F. A. Lamber [1919]) to composition during the age of Solomon (Gregory of Nazianzus; H. A. C. Havernick [1849]; C. F. Keil [1853]; F. Delitzsch [1864]; and E. J. Young [1949]).[17] The writer provisionally concurs with Young's assessment that the events date from patriar-chal times and the final composition from (no later than) Solomonic times.[18] The discussion will at least assume the

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[14] See Harrison, p. 691; Archer, p. 274; Young, pp. 169-70.

[15] Archer, p. 274.

[16] See-Archer, pp. 456-62; Harrison, p. 1040; Young, pp. 319 ff.

[17] The list is taken from Harrison, p. 1040, whom see for complete documentation.

[18] Young, pp. 319, 323. Due to the uncertainty in this matter, greater weight will be given to the first three documents than will be assigned to Job.

possibility that the king was aware of the document or an outline of its contents.

Davidic Psalms[19]

As argued in the preceding chapter, King Solomon was considerably influenced by his father David, the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. xxiii.l). Fortunately, we have an entirely reliable record of David's faith preserved in the Davidic Psalms, wherein the fountainhead whence Solomon's own faith flowed may be explored.

According to the methodology outlined in Chapter Two, we shall now turn to a survey of the pertinent theological contents of the writings enumerated above.

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[19] See the discussions in Archer, Harrison, Unger, and Young. The writer believes that he is in accord with contextual and New Testament evidence in seeing the ל of the Davidic Psalms' superscriptions as being original and indicative of authorship.

CHAPTER FOUR

Painting the Backdrop

In this section a sort of backdrop will be painted,
illustrating the theology which informed Solomon as he
authored his Proverbs. Almost exclusive concentration will
be devoted to those data which pertain to the emphasis
entertained in Part Two, *viz*., the sovereignty of Yahweh.
The ensuing discussion will locate and illuminate the quarry
whence Solomon's ideas concerning Yahweh's sovereign control
of events and individuals were mined.

Pentateuchal Data

Primary for the doctrine of sovereignty is the portrayal
in the early chapters of Genesis of Yahweh as creator of
all.[1] If Yahweh were not indeed creator of all, He could
not be sovereign in creation, providence, or redemption.[2]
It was this framework of creation which provided the setting
for the reflections of Solomon and the other sages.[3] In
striking contrast to Mesopotamian creation accounts, Genesis

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[1] R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom* (New York: Mac-
millan, 1971), pp. 115-16.

[2] J. Oliver Buswell, "Creation," *Baker's Dictionary
of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), p. 146.

[3] Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of the Wisdom
in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *Scottish
Journal of Theology*, 17 (1964), 148.

narrates a struggle-free fiat creation, in which Yahweh's

mere verbalization of His desires results in the existence

of the intended result.[4] Because all entities, sentient

and non-sentient, exist due to the will of God, creation is

utterly subordinated to Yahweh's will.[5]

Genesis consistently depicts Yahweh as taking the ini-

tiative, whether in creation (i.1 ff.), judgment (iii.14 f.;

vi.5 f.; xi.l f.; xix.l f.), or election (xii.l f.). The

most illuminating revelation of Yahweh's exhaustive control

may be found in the Joseph narratives, in which Yahweh acts

through the brothers' evil deeds for a good end. No facile

equivocation is met in these chapters; the brothers did

indeed harbor an evil intention (1.20a), but Yahweh moved

through the entire chain for His beneficent ends (xlv.5, 7;

1.20b). As Carson aptly observes,

> the text will not allow the brothers to be classed
> as puppets and thus to escape their guilt. On the
> other hand, neither does it picture God as *post
> eventu* deflecting the evil action of the brothers
> and transforming it into something good.[6]

The point is worthy of stress: Yahweh reaches His determined

goal by His sovereign control of the human process of

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[4] Witness the later reflection on this fact in the
anonymous Psalm xxxiii.6, 9.

[5] Zimmerli, p. 153. See also D. A. Carson, *Divine
Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta: John Knox,
1981), pp. 24 f.

[6] Carson, p. 10.

fomenting and executing evil plans.[7]

It is in the fact of Yahweh's creation and control of what exists that the Wisdom writings can derive their doctrine of the orderliness of the universe.[8] By virtue of this fact, Yahweh transcends the cosmos and gives it its order and harmony.[9] The order is not an end in itself; man's faith must be directed to Yahweh, who originated and maintains this order.[10]

Genesis also depicts Yahweh as sovereign in His choice and rejection of different individuals. The doctrine of reprobation is found, at least in germinal form, in Gen. xxv.22-23. Here Yahweh expessses His election of the younger child, and His concomitant rejection of the elder.[11] The subsequent histories of these individuals evidence

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[7] See the brief but pithy discussion in Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge* (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), pp. 78-79 (footnote 1).

[8] Cf. Elmer Martens, *God's Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), p. 181; Bruce K. Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature," *Bibliotheca Sacra,* 136, No. 543 (1979), 234; C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Poetic Books of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), p. 55; and James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), pp. 18-19, 54, 67.

[9] Crenshaw's remark that Yahweh is "to a certain extent . . . caught up in this system" (*O. T. Wisdom,* p. 95) is puzzling at best, in view of Scripture's insistence upon God's freedom.

[10] Bruce K. Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and Old Testament Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 136, No. 544 (1979), 309.

[11] That such full value is to be drawn from the text is evidenced by later, inspired reflections (Mal. i.2 f.; Rom. ix.10 f.).

Yahweh's choice.

Similar themes are developed harmoniously in the book of Exodus. Faithful to His covenant with the fathers, Yahweh delivers His chosen people in a manner specifically designed to show His matchless, sovereign superiority over the false deities of Egypt (vii.14-xii.36). In this manner, God demonstrates both His election of Israel (cf. usage of "My people" in iii.7; v.1, *et passim*) and His rejection of the heathen (cf. viii.22 f.; ix.2 f.). As particular evidence of the latter, Yahweh informs Pharaoh that He had established him for the display of God's glory (ix.16; see Paul's God-breathed commentary on this episode in Rom. ix. 17 f.). This glorious display involved Yahweh's prior decision to harden Pharaoh's heart (iv.21), manifesting His electing and rejecting prerogative (cf. Rom. ix.18).

As covenant Sovereign, Yahweh in one act judges the Egyptians and separates the Israelites unto Himself (xii). Having delivered His people, Yahweh appoints the laws and statutes by which they are to live, and in which they are to find their true health and happiness (xix). Although the entire earth was His possession, to be disposed according to His pleasure (xix.5b), Yahweh had chosen Israel to be His (xix.4 f.).

A revealing note is sounded in Exodus xxi.13. Yahweh lays down the general principle in verse 12 that anyone who is the cause of a man's death should suffer the death penalty. After this basic law, specific provisions are made

for exceptional cases. The determining factor was the motivation, or lack thereof, for murder. Thus verse thirteen excludes from capital offense culpability the man who has not lurked about for the murder of the victim. This sort of case is what could be called an "accidental death"--yet the text clearly attributes the death to God's agency (v. 13). "Thus even what men call accidental death is under God's direction," as Oehler observes.[12]

The Hebrew world-view is revealed boldly in such texts as these. As Davidson correctly observes,

> Two beliefs characterise the Hebrew mind from the beginning; first, the strong belief in causation,--every change on the face of nature, must be due to a cause; and, secondly, that the only conceivable cause is a personal agent. . . . Everything is supernatural, i. e. direct Divine operation.[13]

It is in fact this recurring and almost substructural emphasis on the controlling factor of God's will that gives unity and force to the Old Testament.[14] Theories of mere "permission" fall short of doing justice to the data of revelation, creating a dualism which is false to the spirit of the

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[12] Gustav F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament,* Amer. ed. George E. Day (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978 [rpt.]), p. 122.

[13] A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament,* ed. S. D. F. Salmond (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), p. 113.

[14] Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament,* trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), p. 37. Cf. also John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. Reid (London: James Clarke, 1961 [rpt.]), p. 123, and R. B. Girdlestone, *Old Testament Theology and Modern Ideas*, Anglican Church Handbooks (London: Longmans and Green, 1909), pp. 83-93.

Old Testament.[15]

Leviticus stresses in its twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters a theme with which Wisdom Literature is redolent--the law of retribution.[16] Simply put, the principle is that "he who did right [*viz*., who walked in Yahweh's laws] would find his whole environment friendly; while he who forsook 'the way of Yahweh' would find himself thwarted at every turn."[17] Obedience would bring Yahweh's comprehensive blessing (Lev. xxvi.3-13), disobedience His comprehensive curse (Lev. xxvi.l4 ff.).[18] Thus, the key to the truly good life lay in maintaining good relations with Yahweh.

The book of Numbers depicts Yahweh as Israel's sovereign commander, making their way straight before them (Num. ix.15 f.; cf. Prov. iii.5). Yahweh manifests His election

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[15] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament,* trans. J. A. Baker, OTL,-II (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 178-79.

[16] For discussions of the principle and examinations of varying theories, see Eichrodt, II, 423; J. A. Emerton, "Wisdom," in *Tradition and Interpretation*, ed. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), pp. 216-17; John G. Gammie, "The Theology of Retribution in the Book of Deuteronomy," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 32, No. 1 (1970), 1-12; W. O. E. Oesterly, *The Book of Proverbs*, Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen, 1929), pp. lxi-lxiv; Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), p. 128.

[17] Fleming James, "Some Aspects of the Religion of Proverbs," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 51 (1952), 33.

[18] "This retribution is not the result of an impersonal fate but that of a personal God," observes D. A. Hubbard, "The Wisdom Movement and Israel's Covenant Faith," *Tyndale Bulletin,* No. 17 (1966), p. 10.

and rejection in terms of singling out those who are to be His servants, and rejecting any who would try to usurp this privilege (Num. xvi-xvii). Numbers also depicts Yahweh as sovereign over individuals. He is the God of the spirits of *all* flesh (xvi.22; xxvii.16). This is illustrated in the attempted hiring of the prophet Balaam to curse Israel, during which episodes Yahweh constantly overrides the prophet and the king by pronouncing His blessing on His people (xxii.18, 35; xxiii.5, 20).

The book of Deuteronomy iterates the same doctrine of retribution discussed above (cf. Deut. xxviii). Yahweh is also seen to have freely chosen Israel out of His love and faithfulness, rather than out of any prevenient virtues in the objects of His electing love (Deut. vii.6 f.). Yahweh's control extends far beyond the borders of Israel, for He is able to bring a foreign nation upon Israel for discipline should it please Him (Deut. xxviii.49 f.), controlling the rulers and strategists of that nation as surely as if they were His puppets--though not contrary to their nature.

Data From Joshua

Yahweh is prominent as the God who grants success to His obedient servants. Obedience that brings success is characterized by heeding His law-word (Josh. i.8; cf. Prov. xvi.20). This is so sure and certain that the text often finds it sufficient to state simply that Yahweh was or would be "with" a given individual (Josh. i.5, 9, 17; vi.27, etc.).

To know Yahweh's presence was enough, for He was the Guarantor of success and victory.

This confidence of victory could, however, be forfeited. When, in such a case, Achan's sin brought ruin to his people (Josh. vii), Israel utilized the inerrant lot to determine the criminal (Josh. vii.14-18; cf. Prov. xvi.33). The same lot also determined the division of the land (cf. Josh. xiv.2; xviii.6, 10, etc.). "Even in drawing lots there rules no chance, Prov. xvi. 33; and so . . . the lot is used in seeking to know the divine will."[19]

Data From Judges

Judges paints a series of pictures illustrating the principle of retribution. When Israel forsakes Yahweh and His laws, He activates the thoughts and plans of foreign dignitaries in such a way as to give them success over Israel, to effect the sure punishment of the latter (Judg. ii.11 f.; iii.7 f., 12 f.; iv.1 f., etc.). With equal sovereignty, Yahweh also is at work to mercifully assure the deliverance of His people (as indicated in the programmatic statement of Judg. iii.l8)..

Yahweh's work with individuals is, to say the least, varied. He activates Samson in such a manner as to be "seeking an occasion against the Philistines" (Judg. xiv.4) --using the morally wrong actions of Samson in the process

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[19] Oehler, p. 122.

(Judg. xiv.l f.)! Yahweh's Spirit comes upon Othniel
(iii.10), Gideon (vi.34), Jephthah (xi.29), and Samson
(xiii.25), certainly as diverse a group of men as one could
hope to find, for the sole purpose (as one may readily sur-
mise) of executing His will. When Yahweh wishes to judge
evil men, He sends an evil spirit[20] between differing
factions for the accomplishment of His purpose (Judg.
ix.23-24). Yahweh may indeed turn the individual just as
He pleases (Prov. xxi.l).

Data From Job

As this student understands it, the book of Job finds
its unifying theme and resolution in the free sovereignty of
God, exercised in blessing, hardship, and providence.
Yahweh gives Job great abundance in keeping with his piety
(i.1 f.), protecting those possessions from Satan (i.10a) so
that the latter may not touch so much as a molecule that is
Job's without Yahweh's permission (i.12). When the enemy is
allowed to strike Job's property and family, Job recognizes
even this as coming from Yahweh ultimately (i.21b). Even
after the adversary touches Job personally, Job acknowledges
Yahweh's sovereign right to dole out adversity (הָרָע, ii.10).
In all of the circular debatings between Job and his
"friends," none of the contestants employs the modern

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[20] It makes no essential difference whether one sees
the term as being used ontologically or psychologically; the
central point is that the socially disrupting influence was
sent by Yahweh--the "flip side" of Prov. xvi.7.

commonplace of deferring to intermediate agencies or free will. They are all agreed that Yahweh stands behind Job's experience; the only question in their minds was, "Why did Yahweh bring *this* turn of events?" The three thought the cause lay in Job's sin; Job rather seemed to be of the opinion that the cause lay in a sort of administrative error (xix.9; xxvii.2; cf. xxiv.5).

When He makes His appearance, Yahweh is not recorded to have explained the dialogue with Satan to which the readers had already been privy (chaps. i-ii). Instead, He asserts His comprehensive sovereignty over all of reality as its Creator and Sustainer (Job xxxviii-xlii). Job may dispute with God when He can produce the requisite credentials (xxxviii.4 f., 31 ff.; xxxix.l f., etc.). The point is not lost on Job, who admits his folly (xlii.3-6) and affirms Yahweh's absolute sovereignty (xlii.2).

Data From the Davidic Psalms

The resources in the Davidic Psalms are rich and varied and supply a great aid in understanding Solomon's theological background, so we shall survey the data drawn therefrom. Yahweh is seen as exalted so far above the greatest rulers of the earth in Psalm ii[21] that He may laugh at their

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[21] Although the Hebrew text is without an ascription, the New Testament claims David as the author in Acts iv.25 (though cited without ascription elsewhere--Acts xiii.33; Heb. v.5, etc.). The New Testament testimony is accepted in this discussion.

fierce plottings (Ps. ii.4; cf. lxix.8). This is so because
Yahweh's kingdom extends over all Gentiles (xxii.8), for He
is the King of Glory (xxiv.8, 10; xxvii.11) forever (xxix.
10; cf. lxvi.7), with a kingdom (מַלְכוּת) that rules over all
the world under the heavens, in which His throne is estab-
lished (ciii.l9). Yahweh is David's own king (obviously
subordinating the derivative sovereignty of David to Yahweh;
cxlv.1; cf. Prov. xxi.1), and His kingdom is majestic and
glorious (Ps. cxlv.12-13).

In his personal relationship to Yahweh, David has come
to know Him to be his shield and protection (iii.3-6;
vii.10; xviii.1-3, 30; cxlii.5), who could direct David in
his path, establishing his steps and making his way broad
(xvi.7; xviii.32, 36; xxxvii.31; cxliii.8; cf. Prov. iii.5),
fulfilling all of David's deepest needs (Ps. xxiii) and
dispelling fear by His presence (xxiii.3; xxvii.l). None
can harm the man whom Yahweh protects (lvi). David had
found Yahweh to be a God to whom he could commit his path,
plans, and person (xxii.8; xxxi.5; xxxvii.5; lv.22; lxviii.
19; cf. Prov. xvi.3). Yahweh's word had healed, restored,
and given great reward to David (Ps. xix.7-11; cf. Prov.
xvi.20). Even his steps had been established by Yahweh
(Ps. xxxvii.23; cf. Prov. xx.24), whose knowledge and con-
trol of David's life were exhaustive (Ps. cxxxix).

Yahweh could exercise such sovereignty because He was
creator. In fact, the heavens were *His* heavens (Ps. viii.3;
cxix.5); rather than saying with moderns "*it* is thundering,"

David's view of nature led him to say "Yahweh thunders" (cf. xxix.3). Because He is creator, the entire world and its inhabitants are Yahweh's personal possession (xxiv.l), and it is His role to ensure that the creation is maintained (lxv.6-13; cxlv.14-16). Jacob has rightly observed, "The creation is maintained, not by virtue of autonomous laws, but by Yahweh's free will."[22]

Yahweh sovereignly moves in the affairs of men. In electing grace, He chooses and brings near whom He wills (lxv.4). He surrounds His elect with favor as with a shield (v.12). He delivers David from his enemies, restoring a state of peace (iii.7; xviii.48; xxvii.2-3; cf. Prov. xvi.7). David also clearly affirms the doctrine of retribution (Ps. vii.15-16; ix.15-16; xxvii.4; lvii.6). So all-pervading is Yahweh's just rule that a sin against an individual is counted as a sin against Yahweh alone (li.4).

Summary

From the start, the Old Testament contains a strong cord of doctrinal strands presenting the sovereignty of Yahweh in no uncertain terms. Dipping into the well of his revelatory heritage, King Solomon would be taught to view the universe as created, ordered, maintained, and controlled by the good pleasure of Yahweh. The power of Yahweh penetrated the inner thoughts and plans of men, holding sway over both the inception and the results of those intentions.

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[22] Jacob, p. 227.

If need be, Yahweh could reign in any portion of His creation, animate or inanimate, sentient or insentient. No purpose of His could be thwarted; in some way, the present state of affairs reflects His counsel. Such is the foundation for Solomon's theology.

PART II

Applying Theological Exegesis to the

Sovereignty of Yahweh in Proverbs

CHAPTER FIVE

The Sovereignty of Yahweh and Man's Success

In this chapter will be examined three texts relating
to Yahweh's sovereign control of man's steps as taught in
Proverbs. The format (as throughout Part Two) will involve
the exegesis of the text, a theological analysis of the
text, and observations relative to the text.

Proverbs iii.5-6

Trust in [Yahweh] with all your heart,
    And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
    And He will make your paths straight (*NASB*).

Exegesis

Solomon addresses his son (cf. iii.l) with the singular
imperative בְּטַח, imploring him to rely upon Yahweh with all
of his לֵב The term לֵב refers to man's "emotion, thought,
or will."[1] Inasmuch as the next line employs a clearly
noetic term (בִּינָה, insight, discernment), it is probably best
to take the term as referring to the center of thinking,
with the volitional element underlying. Positively, the son
is to devote his entire thought processes to trust in Yahweh;
negatively, he is to eschew reliance (אַל־תִּשָּׁעֵן; שָׁעַן means to

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[1] A[ndrew]   "לָבַב," *Theological Wordbook of
the Old Testament* (hereafter TWOT), ed. R. Laird Harris,
Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, I (Chicago:
Moody, 1980), 466.

lean, whether literally or figuratively)[2] on his own insight into the matter.

The son is to "know Him" (דָעֵהוּ) in all the paths down which his life-course will take him. Although the *NASB* rendering is possible, it seems more likely that the knowledge (like the preceding perceptional terms) is personal rather than transmitted. Thus the sense would be equivalent to "[r]ecognize him,"[3] meaning something like "recognize Him as the unconditional controller over all their willing and doing,"[4] in a knowledge that Delitzsch has termed "practico-mystical."[5] The consequence of this knowledge of Yahweh is the assurance that He will make one's paths straight (יְיַשֵּׁר, factitive use of *Pi'el* imperfect, from the root יָשַׁר to be level, straight).[6]

Theological Analysis

Although verse six has often been taken as a promise of direct, somewhat mystical guidance, it is probable that "[t]he idea of יְיַשֵּׁר is not that of guidance . . . but that

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[2] H[ermann] J. A[ustel], "שָׁעַן," *TWOT*, II, 945.

[3] R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes,* Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), p. 44.

[4] Otto Zöckler, "The Proverbs of Solomon," trans. and ed. C. Aiken, in John P. Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, Vol. V (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978 [rpt.]), p. 61.

[5] F. Delitzsch, trans. M. G. Easton, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon,* Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. VI (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973 [rpt.]), Vol. I, p. 87.

[6] "יָשַׁר" *TWOT.*

of making straight . . . or, perhaps, better still, making smooth."[7] The same form of יַשֵּׁר, is used again in Proverbs xv.21, speaking of the manner in which the man of insight makes his going straight and successful (וְיַשֶּׁר־לָכֶת), as opposed to the foolish way of the crooked man. The point of emphasis would seem to be the priorities of the man. If he puts Yahweh at the center of his universe, being aware of the control and presence of Yahweh,[8] he will find that Yahweh removes the obstacles from his paths and brings him to his right end.[9] The thought is analogous to that expressed by Solomon's father in Psalm xxxvii.4, where the promise of Yahweh's giving one the desires of his heart is preceded by the injunction to delight oneself in Yahweh. David is saying that one's delight in Yahweh will conform one's heart's desires to Yahweh's plan; Solomon is similarly saying that the one who fully trusts in Yahweh, knowing Him in all of life's departments and not leaning upon human viewpoint, will find his path being conformed to Yahweh's will. There is no explicit injunction to seek the guidance of Yahweh; the straightening of the way seems to be solely Yahweh's doing, consequent upon one's maintenance of the right priorities in the knowledge of Yahweh.

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[7] Zöckler, Charles A. Aiken's note, p. 59.

[8] Fleming James, "Some Aspects of the Religion of Proverbs," *Journal of Biblical Literature,* 51 (1932), 38.

[9] Delitzsch, I, 88.

This attitude of wholehearted, undivided trust may well have been instilled by the king's father, whose own attitude is reflected so poignantly in Psalm lxii, wherein the recurrent theme is the waiting of David's soul upon Yahweh alone (cf. verses 1-2, 5, 6). David exhorts the readers/singers to trust in Yahweh "at all times" (v. 8, בְּכָל־עֵת--perhaps conceptually related to בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ, Prov. iii.6). Similar terminology is reflected in the well-known Deuteronomy vi.5, wherein believing Israelites are commanded to be loyal to Yahweh with all of their beings, which results in an occupation with Him extending to all the departments of life (Deut. vi.6-9).

Observations

The manner in which this passage blends with antecedent revelation has been noted above. Casting a brief glance at subsequent revelation, one sees in King Ahaz the very antithesis of this section. Eschewing pure Yahwism, Ahaz sought his succor in humanly-devised aid (Isa. vii.l-2; cf. II Kings xvi.5-18), refusing to trust Yahweh (Isa. vii.9, where note the word-play) and rebelling against His proffered aid (vii.12). As Jeremiah later reflects, when a man trusts in mankind his heart necessarily departs from Yahweh (Jer. xvii.5-6).[10]

Again, Yahweh's "straightening" activity is later seen

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[10] Cf. Charles Bridges, *Proverbs* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968 [rpt.]), p. 23.

in His sovereign, providential removing of obstacles from the path of Cyrus (אֲיַשֵּׁר, Isa. xlv.2; cf. v. 13)--which surely involved no mystical, immediate "guidance." Also, the command goes out to prepare a way for the divine Messiah (Isa. x1.3) by leveling out the terrain (v. 4). This explicit illustration depicts Yahweh's method in assuring the success of His servants.

Proverbs xvi.3

> Commit your works to [Yahweh],
>> And your plans will be established (*NASB*).

Exegesis

The student is exhorted to literally *roll* (גֹּל from גָּלַל) his works onto Yahweh. The root idea of the verb is literal (cf. Gen. xxix.3, 8, 10; Josh. x.18, etc.),[11] but does not likely refer to the rolling of the Urim and Thummim.[12] The metaphorical sense is well-attested, used by Solomon's father in Psalm xxii.8 and xxxvii.5. The works contemplated are probably not so much deeds already done as they are deeds which are to be done (as in Ps. xc.17).[13] The futurity of the deeds is also confirmed by the parallel term "plans" (מַחְשְׁבֹתֶיךָ, a noun derived from חָשַׁב, to think,

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[11] Cf. E[arl] S. K[alland], "גָּלַל," *TWOT*, I, 162-65.

[12] *Pace* Saadia, cited in W. Gunther Plaut, *Book of Proverbs,* The Jewish Commentary for Bible Readers (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961), pp. 176-77.

[13] Delitzsch, I, 336.

reckon, estimate).[14] The appended promise assures the respondent that his contemplated plans will be established. The word used is וְיִכֹּנוּ , which is *waw*-conjunctive with the *Niph'al* imperfect from the root כּוּן, which signifies "to prepare, make ready, establish.[15] Solomon's parallel usages in Proverbs (xii.3; xvi.12; iii.19; xxix.14) support the idea of a thing being rendered stable, secure, and lasting. The simple וְ used with the imperfect form here suggests a non-indicative mood, perhaps the subjunctive; thus one may accept McKane's rendering, "that your plans. . . ."[16]

Theological Analysis

A divine-human interplay is attested in this verse. The human is seen as a significant actor; the deeds are "your" deeds, and the plans are "your" plans. Nevertheless, the fruition of the plans is dependent upon Yahweh's pleasure. For that reason, the plans must consciously be submitted to the Sovereign with "an element of resignation to Yahweh's will, a willingness to give up anything which clashes with Yahweh's resolve and so a request for attunement and harmony."[17]

Solomon's stress upon the necessity of commitment to

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[14] Cf. L[eon] J. W[ood], "חָשַׁב," *TWOT*, I, 329-30.

[15] J[ohn] N. O[swalt], "כּוּן," *TWOT*, I, 433.

[16] William McKane, *Proverbs*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), p. 235.

[17] McKane, p. 497.

Yahweh was doubtless derived from his father (cf. Ps. xxii.8; xxxi.5; xxxvii.5; lv.22; lxvii.19). As Solomon himself attested elsewhere, ever so much labor in building and guarding is worthless if Yahweh's blessing is absent from an endeavor (Ps. cxxvii.1-2). No human acts or plans can counter Yahweh (Prov. xix.21; xxi.30). Such knowledge was important for a king; plan as he might, nothing outside of Yahweh's sovereign will could hope for fulfillment.

Observations

The emphasis of this verse is clearly positive and optimistic; the assumption underlying the text is that the planner is in harmony with Yahweh's designs. Godly plans which fail inexplicably are not considered here. In any event, as a later (?) psalmist sang, the believer who feared Yahweh would not fear evil tidings, because his own heart would be fixed, established, steadfast (נָכוֹן), in his trust of Yahweh (Ps. cxii.7). By contrast, those whose plans were not committed to Yahweh would come to know what it was to be vetoed from above (cf. Isa. vii.7 and context; also x1.23-24; Neh. iv.15).

<div align="center">

Proverbs xvi.7

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When a man's ways are pleasing to [Yahweh],
　　　He makes even his enemies to be at peace with
　　　him (*NASB*).

Exegesis

The largest exegetical question concerns the subject of

יַשְׁלִם. Some see אִישׁ as the subject of the verb.[18] However,

אִישׁ is the construent of דַּרְכֵי־ which would mean that the alternative subject to Yahweh is not the man but the *ways of* the man. This concept is possible and yields an acceptable sense, but might more naturally call for a verb in the plural number, whereas יַשְׁלִם is singular--although the number of the verb could agree with either the absolute or the con-struct word. The first stich, in this case, does not par-ticularly underscore the need for good, wise, or successful behavior. Rather, the question raised by the first stich is, Do a given man's ways please Yahweh? When this question can receive an affirmative reply, the second stich gives assurance that *He*--Yahweh, the crucial Person of the first stich--will make even that man's enemies to be at peace with the man. Since Yahweh is the crucial element and touchstone of the first clause, it is best to see Him as the prime Actor in the second clause. The verb is a *Hiph'il* imperfect inflection from the root שָׁלַם, which means to be in a state or covenant of peace.[19] Thus, Yahweh is said to make even the enemies of a man whose ways please Him to cease from their enmity, coming into a sound and peaceful relationship with the man.

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[18] So McKane; see also A. Cohen, *Proverbs*, Soncino Books of the Bible (London: Soncino, 1946), p. 104.

[19] G. L[loyd] C[arr], "שָׁלֵם," *TWOT*, II, 930.

Theological Analysis

Solomon would have found both the truth of this general principle and some exceptions to it in the life of his father. David was hunted by Saul for no fault of his own, and in spite of the fact that he was a man who pleased Yahweh (I Sam. xvi.12b-13; cf. xiii.14). At will, Yahweh gave David moments of respite in the (temporary) restoration of peaceful relations with Saul (e.g., I Sam. xxiv.15-17; cf. Bridges, p. 231). Similarly, Joseph was hated by his brothers, but was given grace in the eyes of his masters (Gen. xxxix.2-5). The bottom-line theological point here is that it is always within Yahweh's power to grant favor to His servants, giving them success in personal relations. Solomon himself had known what it was to have Yahweh grant rest (here the verb is הֵנִיחַ) from all adversaries (I Kings v.4), and he knew that Yahweh was able to do so at any suitable time.

Deserving of some emphasis is the relation of this verse to the "free will" theory which some have advanced. It would appear from this verse that the primary emphasis is vertical, teaching that once one's relationship with Yahweh is as it should be, Yahweh is able to control the volitions of others in such a way as to bring about a state of peace where enmity had formerly existed.

Observations

The larger context of Scripture shows this verse to be

true in principle, but capable of modification. "Other
scriptures (*e. g.* Jn. 15:18ff.) show that this is not a flat
statement of law, but an encouragement to fearlessness," as
Kidner remarks.[20] God allows His godly ones to suffer
the pressure of the worldlings (II Tim. iii.12), even as He
had allowed the flawless Lord Jesus to be killed by wicked
men (who were no less under His control--Acts ii.23;
iv.27-28).[21]

Summary

The focus of one's life must be upon Yahweh first and
foremost. If such as the case with one's heart, Yahweh can
grant success to one's life (Prov. iii.6), plans (xvi.3),
and personal relations (xvi.7), due to His control of those
areas and all others.

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[20] Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs,* TOTC (Downers Grove:
Inter-Varsity, 1964), p. 119.

[21] Cf. Bridges, p. 231.

CHAPTER SIX

The Sovereignty of Yahweh and Man's Plans

Due to the relative abundance of texts asserting the
control Yahweh exercises over the plans of men, only six
verses will be singled out for examination: Proverbs xvi.l,
9, 33; xix.21; xx.24; and xxi.l.

Proverbs xvi.l

The plans of the heart belong to man,
      but the answer of the tongue is from [Yahweh]
      (*NASB*).

Exegesis

The exegesis of this passage is quite problematic, to
say the least. The verse introduces a series of Proverbs.
dealing with the theme "man proposes, God disposes."[1] The
least that may be safely said would seem to be that man's
plans are here contrasted with "the answer of the tongue,"
which (whatever it is) comes from Yahweh.[2] The word for
plans (מַעַרְךָ) occurs only here, and "is a word suggesting
placing things in order: e. g. setting a battle-array

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    [1] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology*
(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), p. 230.
    [2] Although W. O. E. Oesterly (alone, it would appear)
takes the וֹ of the second stanza as continuative, so that
"both thought and its utterance are from God" (*The Book of
Proverbs*, Westminster Commentaries [London: Methuen, 1929],
p. 126).

(Gn. 14:8), or laying a fire (Gn. 22:9)."[3] Each stanza
begins with an inseparable preposition and a noun for empha-
sis; the first preposition is a לְ (in לְאָדָ‍ם), and the second
is מִן (in וּמֵיהוה), contrasting the facts that while the plan
of the heart are man's possessions, the answer of the tongue
issues from Yahweh as ultimate source.

The most troublesome phrase in the verse is מַעֲנֵה לָשׁוֹן.
Does this mean the reply of Yahweh's tongue, His final,
decisive answer,[4] one's own task of speaking in self-defense
before great men,[5] getting an answer to a rough problem as
from Yahweh,[6] the divine gift of the answer that one should
render in any given situation,[7] general inspiration,[8] gen-
eral speech as given success or frustration according to
Yahweh's will,[9] the spoken word with which one would carry
out one's plans after deliberation and subject to Yahweh's

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[3] Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs*, TOTC (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1964), p. 118.

[4] William McKane, *Proverbs*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), pp. 235, 492.

[5] C. H. Toy, *Proverbs*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), p. 320.

[6] F. Delitzsch, *Proverbs* . . . , trans. M. G. Easton, Comm. on the O. T., Vol. VI (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973 [rpt.]), Vol. I, pp. 334-35.

[7] Otto Zöckler, "The Proverbs of Solomon," trans. and ed. C. Aiken, J. *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures,* Vol. V (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978 [rpt.]), p. 154.

[8] *New English Bible*.

[9] John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament,* IV (Streamwood: Primitive Baptist, 1976 [rpt.]), 441.

will,[10] the ability to phrase ideas in convincing words,[11] or something else? The decision is not easy. The term מַעֲנֶה is found again in Proverbs only in xv.l, 23; xvi.4 (?); and xxix.19. The closest grammatical parallel is xv.23, where the phrase is בְּמַעֲנֵה־פִיו, and clearly denotes the answer which one's own mouth gives (as the parallel stanza would seem to demand). This would yield what appears to be a difficult sense: how could it be that the arrangements of the heart would be man's, but the answer which a man's tongue gives would be Yahweh's?

We would suggest that the sense of the verse is this: in man's own perception he mentally struggles about in his calculations and anticipations, searching for the proper path to take. In all of this process, he is unaware of any other influencing factors beside his own mental machinations; it is as if he is alone in the universe, deciding out of his own volition. Yet Yahweh's control is so absolute and so all-encompassing that the man's final decision, the answer which his tongue gives, is ultimately from Yahweh--whether for welfare or for woe. The *thought* (though not the *grammar*) would then be quite parallel to Proverbs xvi.9 and xx.24.

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[10] Gerhard von Rad, trans. James Martin, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), p. 100.

[11] A. Cohen, *Proverbs*, Soncino Books of the Bible (London: Soncino, 1946), p. 103.

Theological Analysis

If the proposed understanding of the verse is correct, its implications are far-reaching. The verse would set in some perspective the sovereignty/volition tension, by teaching that man's proper duty is the construction of arrangements concerning his own future--but never forget that the final result (*whatever* it may be) is an expressive result of the all-embracing will of Yahweh.

Solomon would have known that Yahweh had exercised direct control over the tongue of the pagan prophet Balaam,[12] overruling what the prophet might otherwise have wished to say. In fact, he basically would have been reflecting the biblical world-view as outlined in Chapter Four, above.

Observations

The truth of this verse blends in with the statement of Isaiah concerning Yahweh's comprehensive creative control (Isa. xlv.7), as well as with the New Testament church's understanding of God's control (Acts ii.23; iv.27-28; cf. Eph. i.11). Man remains responsible for his arrangements and preparations, but Yahweh controls and holds the reins on the entire process (cf. Dan. iv.35; Rom. ix.19-20).

Proverbs xvi.9

The mind of man plans his way,
    But [Yahweh] directs his steps (*NASB*).

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[12] Num. xxii.18; cf. Bridges, p. 224.

Exegesis

The proverb is something of a cross between xvi.l and 3. The mind of man calculates, reckons, makes estimates (יְהַשֵּׁב) concerning his way, as in xvi.la (allowing for different terminology). His steps are, however, established and made firm (rather than *NASB's* "directs"; יָכִין) by Yahweh according to His will.

Theological Analysis

Again, the volition of man is given its proper and significant role in making careful decisions concerning the way to choose. As always, however, the last word belongs to Yahweh. In this, Solomon was theologically informed by the same traditions noted in the passage above and in Chapter Four.

Of particular background value is Genesis 1.20. Joseph allows that the brothers had indeed calculated and intended (חֲשַׁבְתֶּם) evil against him, but Yahweh had intended and calculated it (חֲשָׁבָהּ) for good. The brothers had made their plan, but the actual intent and results issued from Yahweh.

Observations

As Bridges observes, "What vast results hung upon the sleepless night of the Eastern autocrat! Esth. vi. 1" (p. 233). Even the restive pacings of the king were directed by Yahweh and were made firm in the accomplishment of His decree. As the psalmist Asaph observed, Yahweh is able to catch and establish us just as our steps are slipping and we

are in danger of falling (Ps. lxxiii.2 ff.).

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Proverbs xvi.33
The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision is from [Yahweh]
(*NASB*).

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Exegesis

The first term in the first clause is בְּחֵיק, referring
(according to Oesterley) to the fold in the garment at the
breast where things were carried.[13] Into this fold is
hurled[14] the גּוֹרָל, the "lot," which appears to have been a
small stone or pebble which could be thrown so as to land in
such a way as to render a decision in a matter.[15] The deci-
sion in this case is referred to as a מִשְׁפָּט, a judgment. The
proverb declares that the decision comes from Yahweh.

Theological Analysis

Although we may be fairly sure that this verse is not
necessarily a "certain reference to the machinery for con-
sulting Urim and Thummim," *pace* McKane,[16] it is difficult to
determine the exact context of this lot-casting. There is

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[13] Oesterley, p. 137.
[14] Oesterley, p. 137, who observes that this is the
only occurrence of the verb in this connection.
[15] E[arl] S. K[alland], "גרל," *Theological Wordbook of
the Old Testament* (hereafter *TWOT*), ed. R. Laird Harris,
Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, I (Chicago:
Moody, 1980), 171-72.
[16] McKane, p. 499.

no compelling reason for ruling out a reference to God in
the casting of this lot.[17] Although the Pentateuch does not
mandate the use of the lot explicitly, its use is taken up
and sanctioned to a certain degree.[18] Delitzsch correctly
observes that "it was a practice, animated by faith, in
God's government of the world, which . . . stood high above
the unbelief of the 'Enlightenment.'"[19] Kidner goes beyond
the evidence in asserting that this verse refers not to God's
control of random events, but to His "settling of matters
properly referred to Him."[20] Oehler both affirms what is
here taken as the proper signification of the text and pro-
vides the background of antecedent revelation: "Even in
drawing lots there rules no chance, Prov. xvi.33; and so in
Num. xxvi. 55f., Josh. vii. 14ff., xiv. 2, 1 Sam. xiv. 41,
the lot is used in seeking to know the divine will."[21] Von
Rad is surely wide of the mark in denying full theological
significance to this verse.[23] Solomon uses a figure which,

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[17] R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs,* Cambridge Bible
Commentary (London: Cambridge, 1972), p. 97. Cf. Toy,
p. 334.

[18] Delitzsch, I, 351.   [19] Delitzsch, I, 352.

[20] Kidner, p. 122.

[21] Gustav Friederich Oehler, Amer. ed. G. Day, *Theology
of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978
[rpt]), p. 122.

[22] Glendon Bryce, *A Legacy of Wisdom* (Cranbury: Assoc.
Univ. Presses, 1979), p. 199.

[23] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans.
D. M. G. Stalker, II (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 439.

at present, is proverbial for pure randomness and chance, and utilizes the figure to illustrate Yahweh's sovereignty.

Observations

Kidner points out that the last recorded use of the lot is in Acts i.26, after which it became inappropriate guidance for a church composed of individuals who were no longer slaves who knew not their Master's plans.[24] It is of peripheral interest (and uncertain connection) to note the use of the figure again in II Peter i.1, wherein the apostle addresses his letter to those who had obtained an equally precious faith *by lot* (τοῖς ἰσότιμον ἡμῖν λαχοῦσιν πίστιν).

Proverbs xix.21

Many are the plans in a man's heart,
But the counsel of [Yahweh], it will stand
(*NASB*).

Exegesis

As in xvi.3 the reader encounters the noun מַחְשְׁבוֹת, referring to the calculated plans and thoughts of the human heart in all of their diversity. This plural noun is opposed to the singular עֵצָה of Yahweh, contrasting the conflicting desires of the human mind as opposed to the unified and successful counsel of Lord Yahweh. The emphasis on the singularity of Yahweh's counsel is stressed syntactically by the feminine pronoun הִיא. This counsel תָקוּם, will stand--

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[24] Kidner, p. 122.

both in becoming actual fact and in enduring.[25]

Theological Analysis

In terms of theological background, Solomon had doubt-less heard from his father concerning the time David had prayed that Yahweh would turn his enemy Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness (II Sam. xvi.31), which Yahweh did (II Sam. xvii.l4). Previously, Yahweh had seen that the מַחְשְׁבוֹת of men's hearts were only wicked all day (Gen. vi.5), and His willingness to cancel out these machinations in favor of His own counsel is not surprising.

Observations

Again, Yahweh retains the power of veto. Several centuries after Solomon (Isa. xlvi.10), God is overheard saying עֲצָתִי תָקוּם (a reminiscence of the same words found in this verse?), וְכָל־חֶפְצִי אֶעֱשֶׂה (a reminiscence of similar words found in Ps. cxv.37). No serious challenge to His sovereign counsel is contemplated.

Proverbs xx.24

> Man's steps are ordained by [Yahweh],
>> How then can man understand his way? (*NASB*).

Exegesis

The first stich is without a verb, reading literally, "From Yahweh the steps of a strong man." Lord Yahweh is the source of the man's steps; it might be better to supply a

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[25] Delitzsch, II, 32.

less "loaded" phrase such as "come from," rather than "are ordained by" (*NASB*) or some form of "direct" (*NEB, Anchor Bible* [Scott]). The man is a גֶּבֶר, a strong man; how much more would this apply to an ordinary man![26]

The resultant query concerns man's inability to see into (יָבִין from בִּין to discern, have insight)[27] the meaning of his way. Since the infinite God Yahweh is the source of man's way, what finite man of dust (אָדָם) can penetrate into an exhaustive knowledge of His purposes?

Theological Analysis

Solomon may begin this proverb with a quotation from his father's words in Psalm xxxvii.23, since the wording is identical.[28] Man's ignorance concerning the ultimate meanings and issues of his life must move him to unqualified trust in Yahweh, his ultimate source.[29] Yahweh both rules and overrules men,[30] and should receive their full reliance. It is this ignorance which rules out any leaning upon one's own בִּינָה (Prov. iii.5). All men are very small pieces upon a very large board; Yahweh has the advantage of a total overview, which is denied to mankind. Thus men must trust Him.

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[26] W. Gunther Plaut, *Book of Proverbs,* Jewish Commentary for Bible Readers (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961), p. 213.

[27] L[ouis] G[oldberg], "בִּין," *TWOT*, I, 103.

[28] Cohen, p. 136; Delitzsch, Vol. II, p. 55.

[29] Whybray, p. 116.   [30] Kidner, p. 140.

Observations

The prophet Jeremiah later reminisces on the same truth, reflecting more fully that it belonged (in the last analysis) to man neither to possess his way autonomously nor to direct his steps (Jer. x.23). "God's uncontrollable power and sovereignty; man's absolute dependence and help-lessness--let these be foundation principles," exhorts Bridges wisely.[31] The verse is not intended to paralyze man but to assign to him his true place at the feet of the Master of the universe.

Proverbs xxi.l

> The king's heart is like channels of water
>> in the hand of [Yahweh];
>> He turns it wherever He wishes (*NASB*).

Exegesis

More literally, the verse reads: "Channels of water (is) the king's heart in Yahweh's hand. . . "Just as a farmer leads water along the irrigation channels in pursu-ance of his agricultural projects, Yahweh directs the mind of the king and makes him the agent of his designs."[32] The verb translated by "wishes" is יַחְפֹּץ, the *Qal* imperfect form' from the root חָפֵץ, which means "to take delight in, be pleased with, desire."[33] The verb denotes being emotionally pleased and satisfied in something. "Turns" renders יַטֶּנּוּ , a

[31] Bridges, p. 357. [32] McKane, p. 559.

[33] L[eon] J. W[ood], "חָפֵץ," *TWOT*, I, 310.

Hiph'il imperfect form of the root נָטָה. It is frequently

used of literal and metaphorical inclination, applied to

wadis and heart alike.[34]

Theological Analysis

  This is an interesting proverb to find on the lips of a

king. Solomon found his proper place at the disposal of

Yahweh, and realized that he was not above the control of

the King. Calvin's comment is apposite, as he notes that

Solomon in this verse

> comprehends the whole race under one particular
> class. If any will is free from subjection, it
> must be that of one possessed of regal power, and
> in a manner exercising dominion over other wills.
> But if it is under the hand of God, ours surely
> cannot be exempt from it.[35]

The truth of this verse gives trouble to the theory of free

will[36]--except as possessed by Yahweh. Calvin further

remarks that this verse goes far to show Yahweh's control

over "the depraved affections of the ungodly," and shows

that "in general the will not less than external works are

governed by the determination of God."[37] Remarkably enough,

however, the setting of this verse in as pragmatic a book as

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[34] M[arvin] R. W[oudstra], "נָטָה," *TWOT*, II, 573-74.

[35] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. H. Beveridge, I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975 [rpt.]), 270.

[36] Cf. the strong words of Gordon Clark, *Biblical Predestination* (Nutley: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), p. 125.

[37] John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. Reid (London: James Clarke, 1961 [rpt.]), p. 175.

Proverbs forbids the application of this verse in any way that would lead to what Eichrodt calls "a flat determination depriving Man of the responsibility for his actions."[38]

Solomon would have seen this truth illustrated often in antecedent Scripture. God had kept the (pagan?) Abimelech, king of Gerar, from sinning against Himself in taking Sarah (Gen. xx.6; cf. Ps. cv.14-15, a later reflection).[39] Yahweh also controlled Pharaoh in Joseph's day for the good of the chosen people and, derivatively, of the Egyptians (Gen. xli. 37-45; xlv.5-7; 1.20). Again, Yahweh had the heart of the Pharaoh of the Exodus equally in His hand, but this time for hardening and judgment (Exod. iv.21; vii.3, etc.). Yahweh could deal freely in keeping with His will in the hearts of men from all walks of life.

Observations

Although Kidner states that this verse treats of providence rather than regeneration,[40] subsequent revelation does not require such a facile differentiation. It is the work of Yahweh to open the heart of one to the Gospel (Acts xvi.14) and to blind or harden the hearts of others (John xii.37 -41).

Surveying subsequent revelation, Kidner very aptly observes that "Tiglath-pileser (Isa. 10:6, 7), Cyrus

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[38] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, II, trans. J. A. Baker, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 178-79.

[39] Bridges, p. 364.   [40] Kidner, p. 141.

(Is. 41:2-4) and Artaxerxes (Ezr. 7:21) are all examples of autocrats who, in pursuing their chosen courses, flooded or fertilized God's field as He chose. The principle is still in force."[41]

This truth formed a most difficult lesson for the sovereign Nebuchadnezzar and necessitated a rather harrowing journey to God's woodshed (Dan. iv., especially verses 17, 25-26, and 34-35). Yahweh could freely use Assyria as His punishing rod (Isa. x.5), sent out on His mission (v. 6), overriding and realigning the purpose of the nation (v. 7)--and then punishing the nation, holding it responsible for its wicked intention in carrying out Yahweh's sovereign decree (v. 12)! In similar manner, the wicked acts of the rulers of Christ's day subserved God's eternal plan (Acts iv.27-28).

Summary

The discussion has shown that Yahweh exercises control over man's plans (Prov. xvi.3; xix.21), steps (xvi.9; xx.24), and speech (xvi.1). Even an apparently random, inanimate object is in His control (xvi.33); nor is absolute King of men beyond His absolute control (xxi.1). Yahweh is ruler of all.

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[41] Kidner, p. 141.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Sovereignty of Yahweh and the Wicked
(Proverbs xvi.4)

[Yahweh] has made everything for its own purpose,
Even the wicked for the day of evil (*NASB*).

The text under consideration is notoriously difficult.
Almost each clause admits of not only differing interpre-
tations but also different translations. It is probably the
most knotty passage in the book of Proverbs, thus meriting
close attention.

Exegesis

The first term encountered is כֹּל, which is necessarily
a singular collective noun.[1] The verb is פָּעַל, meaning to do
or make, and it occurs only in poetic passages.[2] When man
is the subject, the verb denotes moral actions whether good
or bad.[3] Its usage in the sense of "create" is fairly rare;
the participle is found in Job xxxvi.3 in Elihu's reference
to Yahweh. Similar usages with Yahweh as the subject in

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[1] Gill is thus wrong in arguing that the singular
suffix in לְמַעֲנֵהוּ *must* refer to Yahweh; grammatically, it
could refer equally well to כֹּל (John Gill, *The Cause of God
and Truth* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980 (rpt.)], p. 72.)

[2] F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew
and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (hereafter BDB),

[3] V[ictor] P. H[amilton], "פָּעַל," *Theological Wordbook
of the Old Testament* (hereafter *TWOT*), ed. R. Laird Harris,
Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, II (Chicago:
Moody, 1980), 730.

antecedent passages are as follows: Exodus xv.17 (Yahweh
made the mountain of His inheritance for His dwelling place);
Numbers xxiii.23 (what God has wrought for Israel); Deuter-
onomy xxxii.27 (Yahweh's action in judging Israel); Psalm
vii.13 (Yahweh making his arrows fiery shafts); xxxi.19
(Yahweh has made goodness for those who fear Him). Solomon's
other uses in Proverbs refer to man's doing of iniquity
(Prov. x.29; xxi.15). Solomon's father used the noun פֹּעַל to
refer to Yahweh's acts in days past (including creation?;
Ps. cxliii.5). The noun was used in Deuteronomy xxxii.4 to
refer to Yahweh the Rock's works as תָּמִים and again by David
in Psalm lxiv.9 to refer to God's work. The rendering of
the *New International Version*, "works out," yields an inter-
esting sense--but is not supported explicitly by any of the
usages of the verb or noun. All of the usages noted refer
to God's direct, causative action, and not to His mere
superintendence of a process (although this meaning could
conceivably be read into the texts). The text of the Sep-
tuagint here has only the most coincidental relationship to
the Hebrew text and is of no help. Most commentators agree
on or at least accept the meaning of "to make," i.e., cre-
atively.[4] An equally acceptable refinement is added by Gill,

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[4] E.g., R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, Anchor
Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981, 2nd ed.), pp. 104, 106;
Otto Zöckler, "The Proverbs of Solomon," trans. and ed. C.
Aiken, J. Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures,* Vol. V
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978 [rpt.]); and William McKane,
Proverbs, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), pp. 235,
497. The rendering is also supported by the *New English*

who cites usages in Exodus xv.17 and Psalm xxxi.19 to support the idea of a *designing* rather than strictly a *creating* (which would be בָּרָא) or merely a *doing* (which would be עָשָׂה).[5]

The next difficult term is לְמַעֲנֵהוּ. The simplest aspect to identify are the ל preposition and the pronomial suffix הוּ. The root is ענה, to answer or respond,[6] and probably לְמַעֲנֵהוּ represents ל preposition with the noun מַעֲנֶה, an answer or response, rather than the conjectural form מַעַן (cf. frequently used לְמַעַן). Thus, the term means "for his or its response, answer," with the following proffered alternatives: "with its counterpart" (Scott); "for its own end" (*NEB*; cf. Zöckler, Toy); "with relation to its counterpart" (McKane); and "for its purpose" (Delitzsch, Perowne-- which seems more related to לְמַעַן). The repetition of the ל in the next clause in לְיוֹם, with the additional וְגַם, seems to point to a definite end, which supports the rendering of *NEB*, Zöckler, and Toy. The *sense* of the renderings of Scott and McKane is also possible, inasmuch as the counterpart for the wicked man is the day of evil as his end.

This conclusion presupposes that the pronomial suffix in לְמַעֲנֵהוּ refers not to Yahweh but to כֹּל. This is not certain, and the "His" possibility is not to be rejected by

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Bible and the *Modern Language Bible,* to pick two versions from opposite ends of the theological spectrum.

　　[5] Gill, *Cause,* p. 71.　　　　[6] "עָנָה," *BDB.*

some *a priori* theological notions alone.[7] The parallelism
to the second clause of this synthetic parallelism[8] distich
supports the reference of לְמַעֲנֵהוּ to כֹּל, for the second
clause is incomplete and derives its consummative idea from
the first clause.[9] The two thoughts are linked by the first
word of the second clause, וְגַם.

The corresponding end for which Yahweh made the wicked
is said to be לְיוֹם רָעָה. The precise signification of this
phrase is not certain. Some (Calvin, Gill, Bridges) seem to
take the phrase in an eschatological sense, referring to the
damnation of the wicked. This will be discussed further in
the next section; here we note that the precise expression
is not used again in Proverbs. In Ecclesiastes, which we
take as Solomonic, is an interesting parallel. Solomon
counsels his audience in vii.l4 to be happy in the day of
"prosperity" (בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה), but to consider (רְאֵה) in the day
of adversity (בְּיוֹם רָעָה) that Yahweh made (עָשָׂה) the one as
well as the other. One would hardly take the first clause
to refer to the Eternal State; the phrases seem to denote
times of felicity and adversity, respectively. A similar
expression is found in xii.12, where the reader is counseled

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[7] As S. Malan, *Original Notes on the Book of Proverbs*
(London: Williams & Norgate, 1892), p. 376.

[8] John M. Thompson, *The Form and Function of Proverbs
in Ancient Israel* (Paris: Mouton, 1974), p. 61.

[9] C. H. Toy, *Proverbs*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark,
1899), pp. 319-20.

to remember his Creators (בּוֹרְאֶיךָ) he is still young,

before the evil days (יְמֵי הָרָעָה) come. Again, a reference to

perdition would not lie close at hand. There is no question

that the emphasis in the occurrences or רָעָה, in Proverbs is

quite this-worldly (cf., e.g., Prov. i.33; iii.29-30; xi.27;

xiii.21; xvii.l3; xxii.3, etc.). Inasmuch as eschatological

realities were not the regular focus of Old Testament

writers (though by no means beyond their purview), it would

be best to take the primary reference to fall upon pre-death

adversity, perhaps more precisely the "come-uppance" of the

wicked. Yet it must be observed that the general reference

would quite handily fit the eschatological, eternal woes of

the damned, for that period is most surely רָעָה![10]

At the close of this section the writer would proffer

the following interpretive paraphrase: "All has Yahweh

fashioned for its own answering destiny, including the

wicked for their own time of adversity."

Theological Analysis

The very least that could be said for the meaning of

this proverb (and that which is most frequently said, as

being least objectionable) is that it teaches that there are

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[10] The eschatological reference cannot be finally
excluded due to the fact that the first clause seems to
bring up ultimate considerations, reaching as it were into
eternity past to inquire as to the reason for the design of
reality. Since the ultimate meaning of the creation of
things seems to be emphasized, it is not untoward to see a
reference also to the ultimate destiny of those things.

no loose ends in Yahweh's creation.[11] Seeing לְמַעֲנֵהוּ as

referring primarily to כֹּל in no way minimizes this verse's

stress upon the sovereignty of Yahweh, as Perowne observes:
"The two meanings really run into one another, for he who
makes a thing to serve *its own* purpose makes it to serve *his
own* purpose in so making it."[12] The verse also surely pro-
vides a basis for teleological inquiries as well.

Does Proverbs xvi.4 support double-predestination? The
thought may not be dismissed summarily as it is by some,[13]
for antecedent Scripture could suggest the idea (cf. Gen.
xxv.23 [in the later light of Mal. i.2 f., and Rom. ix.
10-18]). It is not surprising that many have adduced this
verse in support of double-predestination.[14] None of the
supporters of this view argues that the verse asserts that
Yahweh made evil men *as such* nor solely for the purpose of
damning them,[15] but rather that the proximate cause for

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[11] E.g., Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs,* TOTC (Downers
Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1964), p. 118, and A. Cohen, *Proverbs,*
Soncino Books of the Bible (London: Soncino, 1946), p. 103.

[12] T. T. Perowne, *The Proverbs,* The Cambridge Bible
Commentary for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge
University, 1916), p. 114.

[13] I.e., F. Delitzsch, *Proverbs . . .,* Vol. I, Bib.
Comm. on the O. T., trans. M. G. Easton (Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 1973 [rpt.]), p. 337.

[14] E.g., J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older
Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), pp. 180, 197;
Gill, *Cause,* p. 71; John Calvin, trans. H. Beveridge, *Insti-
tutes of the Christian Religion,* II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,
1975 [rpt.]), 231.

[15] Cf. Gill, *Cause,* pp. 71-72.

their damnation lies in the evil ones who walk into their doom to the greater glory of God.[16]

Solomon thus confesses that Yahweh made all things to serve assigned purposes. A sterling example would have been found in Yahweh's statement to Pharaoh in Exodus ix.16. Further, since the initial clause is by no means restricted to humans, it would have found antecedence in Genesis 1.20; Yahweh works even in evil situations to bring about thereby His own goal. Earlier, Job had reflected on the truth that the wicked man had been and was being reserved for the day of adversity.[17] Solomon was well in line with the progress of revelation.

Observations

The apostles Paul (Rom. ix.10-23) and Peter (I Pet. ii. 8b; II Pet. ii.9) later reflected upon the same truth. The sovereign purpose of Yahweh embraces all of reality, the wicked no less than the good. This truth is given depth and color when one recalls that all of reality was brought into existence through *and for* the Son (Col. i.16), and for the glory of the Father (Rom. xi.36; Heb. ii.10; Rev. iv.11).

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[16] Cf. John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 442; John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. Reid (London: James Clarke, 1961 [rpt.]), pp. 100-101.

[17] Charles Bridges, *Proverbs* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968 [rpt.]), p. 228.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Summary and Conclusion

The preceding discussion has shown that the deadlock in
Proverbs-studies can be broken if (and only if) the student
is willing to take the text of Scripture seriously as reli-
able factual data. When this step is taken, Proverbs and
other Wisdom writings are seen to fit in with the rest of
Old Testament revelation in perfect harmony. Solomon was
inheritor of a rich and deep tradition of revealed theology,
and he incorporated that into his own world-view. Bifur-
cations are strictly artificial and unwarranted.

The methodology of theological exegesis was applied to
a strand of texts relating the truth of the sovereignty of
Yahweh to the human situation. These verses were found to
accord with and focus the theology already unveiled in
earlier Scripture. These passages assessed that Yahweh
unerringly controls all of reality. On Him depend man's
plans (Prov. iii.5-6; xvi.1, 3), from Him come man's very
steps (Prov. xvi.9; xx.24), on Him the decision of the lot
rests (Prov. xvi.33), to Him the king is pliant (whether
consciously or not; Prov. xxi.l), on Him human relations
depend (Prov. xvi.7), and against Him all plans are of no
avail (Prov. xix.21). Even the human process of deciding
and verbalizing plans depends upon Him (Prov. xvi.l).

All of the data lead in one direction: the realization that all of existence is designed and ruled by the sovereign Lord Yahweh (Prov. xvi.4). Scripture almost exhausts the device of metaphor in stressing this point. As the preceding investigation has shown, this truth grows out of and is in perfect keeping with the assertions of antecedent Scripture, both in its primal form and in its development, both in assertions and in historical narratives. It remains only for the creature to internalize these realities and to find his proper place--in worship of his Creator, at the foot of the cross.

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