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**PROVERBIAL PAIRS:**

**COMPOSITIONAL UNITS IN PROVERBS 10-29**

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I. Willy-Nilly Advocates

One of the most common comments concerning the corpus of Proverbs

10-29 has been that these proverbs are perceived to be a chaotic

confusion--thrown together willy-nilly without any conceptual or literary

cohesion. The following remarks are representative of the majority who

reject any architectonic structure. W. O. E. Oesterley writes, "But generally

speaking, the proverbs are thrown together in a very haphazard fashion in

this collection."l R. Gordon explains that Proverbs is difficult to read because

"there is little continuity or progression:”2 G. von Rad also expresses his

annoyance at the "lack of order."3 W. McKane maintains that the sentences

are independent and atomistic; he labels all vincula between the proverbs as

1Oesterley, *The Book of Proverbs* (London: Methuen, 1929) 125, 73, 77. Other writers who

have expressed similar sentiments are W. C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand

Rapids: Baker, 1981) 93; K. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Proverbs* (repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

1973) 208; R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition* (New York: de Gruyter, 1974) 67; W. S.

LaSor, D. A. Hubbard, and F. W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982)

552; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 1017;

B. H. Kelly, "The Book of Proverbs,. *Int* 2 (1948) 347; and J. L. McKenzie, "The Wisdom of the

Hebrews, in *The Two-Edged Sword* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1959) 217. J. M. Thompson,

to the contrary, makes the following unfortunate statement: "As for our canonical proverbs in

particular, they fail to reach us, it would seem, for still a third reason: they are jumbled together

willy- nilly into collections. (*The Form and Function of Proverbs* [The Hague: Mouton, 1974] 15).

2Gordon, "Motivation in Proverbs," *Biblical Theology* 25 (1975) 49. J. Paterson (*The Wisdom*

*of Israel* [London: Lutterworth, 1961] 63) and P. C. Craigie (“Biblical Wisdom in the Modern

World: I. Proverbs,” *Crux* 15 [1979] 7) make similar comments in terms of the alienation of Pro-

verbs from modern readers because of its lack of topical/logical order. On the contrary, this

writer will maintain that the ordering of Proverbs, when properly understood, will be very

palatable to modern readers (see Barbara and Wolfgang Mieder, "Tradition and Innovation:

Proverbs in Advertising," in *The Wisdom of Many: Essay on the Proverb* [New York: Garland,

1981] 309-22). Furthermore, modern persons' expanding tolerance for farrago (e.g., television

commercials) should allow them to appreciate these proverbs more than their predecessors did.

The rebirth of wisdom studies reflects the modern concern for the ordering of the universe.

3Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972) 113.

207

208 Journal of Biblical Literature

"secondary" and nugatory for interpretation. This is further seen in his

method of analysis, which totally disregards the collectional features of the

canonical text.4 More recently, Bernard Lang opens his work on wisdom as

teacher, goddess, and lady with this statement: "The biblical book of Proverbs

is an almost random collection of brief didactic discourses, poems, learned

and pious sayings."5

Some interpreters have acknowledged that there are small proverbial

clusters, having detected some common theme, catchword, or letter; but they

quickly go on to minimize the importance of such a canonical collectional

phenomenon. J. C. Rylaarsdam comments, "Even when two or more succes-

sive proverbs deal more or less with the same subject (for example, 10:4-5),

the connection seems incidental rather than organic. There is no logical

continuity of thought."6 Thus, many emphasize the atomistic character of the

sentences. Each sentence is indeed a self-contained unit. One should not,

however, ignore collectional features that may give an indication of editorial

tendenz. This paper will attempt to identify the "proverbial pair" as a collec-

tional, architectonic unit above the sentence level.

II. Definition

The proverbial pair may be defined as two proverbial sentences that are

bonded together (whether by means of phonetics, semantics, syntax,

rhetorical device, pragmatic situation or theme) into a higher architectonic

unit. Hence, the "proverbial pair" is proposed to be a literary form which

evinces the literary and editorial craftsmanship of the proverbial collectors

(Prov 25:1).

III. Methodology

What methodology was used for isolating this unit? Initially the text was

read and many possible pairings were isolated. The pairings were then

4McKane, *Proverbs* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) 10, 413, 415.

5Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim,

1986) 3. See also Claudia Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield:

Almond, 1985) 207.

6Rylaarsdam, *The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon* (Layman's Bible Commentary;

Richmond: John Knox, 1964) 48. G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville:

Abingdon, 1965) 320; B. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia:

Fortress, 1979) 79, 555 (Childs says, "There is no significant ordering of the individual proverbs

into larger groups" [p. 555]); Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York:

Harper & Row, 1965) 473. B. W. Kovacs ("Sociological-Structural Constraints" [Ph.D. diss.,

Vanderbilt University, 1978] 289-90) notes McKane's rejection of collectional ideas proposed by

U. Skladny (*Die altesten Spruchsammlungen in Israel* [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,

1962] 7-10). J. L. Crenshaw comments that there is no principle of arrangement. Although he

is well aware of proverbial connections, he does not view these as significant (*Old Testament*

*Wisdom* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1981] 73). See also H. Ranston, *The Old Testament Wisdom Books*

*and Their Teaching* (London: Epworth, 1930) 32.

Hildebrandt: Proverbial Pairs 209

analyzed in three directions. First, the pair was examined to discover what

techniques were used to bind the two sentences. The levels used in estab-

lishing such cohesion may broadly be described as phonetic, syntactic,

semantic, rhetorical, pragmatic, and thematic. Second, once it was shown

that the two sentences were cohesive, then divergences or variational

features were noticed. Third, the adjoining verses, before and after the pair,

were scrutinized to see if the two bonded sayings were part of a larger cluster

or if the pair stood by itself as a separate unit.

It is hoped that, when the regularity of bonding features and the tight-

ness of the pairs are seen, it will be clear that such sentential pairing was not

just random but was editorially intentional. The pairs reveal how the collec-

tors worked with proverbial materials and reflect the theological tendenz and

literary sensitivity of the collectors. Such artistic canonical shaping should

not be ignored, for the regularity of linguistic form implies that meaning is

just around the corner.

How frequent are the pairs in Proverbs 10-29? Sixty-two examples were

discovered and analyzed, which account for 124 verses out of a total of 595

(21 % of the verses manifest this pairing feature).7 Many other bonded units

were also observed in the initial analysis: (1) triads [23:26-28; 24:10-12; et

aI.]; (2) detached pairs [10:8/10; 16:32/17:1; 17:26/18:5; 19:1/18:23; et al.];

(3) pair plus one detached [15:1-2, 4; 15:8-9, 11; 20:16-17, 20; 20:29-30, 27;

10:25-26,23; et al.]; (4) pairs plus one [10:16-17, 18; 15:16-17, 15; 15:31-32,

30; 18:6-7, 8; 23:20-21, 19; et al.]; and (5) strings [11:9-12; 15:29-33; et al.].

Such cohesive features, because of their frequency, must not be ignored as

semiotically insignificant.

IV. Model Pairs: Five Examples

Five examples will illustrate the isolation of pairs and will highlight the

fascinating relationships and interactions within the pairs. Each pair will be

examined for patterns of equivalence and difference within the fields of

semantics, syntax, and theme.

A Semantically Cohesive Pair: Proverbs 26:4-5

Perhaps the most frequently cited proverbial pair is Proverbs 26:4-5.

אַל־תַּ֣עַן כְּ֭סִיל כְּאִוַּלְתּ֑וֹ פֶּֽן־תִּשְׁוֶה־לּ֥וֹ גַם־אָֽתָּה׃

עֲנֵ֣ה כְ֭סִיל כְּאִוַּלְתּ֑וֹ פֶּן־יִהְיֶ֖ה חָכָ֣ם בְּעֵינָֽיו׃

7The following is a list of all pairs isolated in this study: 10:2-3, 4-5, 15-16, 25-26, 31-32;

11:5-6, 16-17; 12:15-16, 18-19; 13:2-3, 7-8, 21-22; 14:20-21, 26-27; 15:1-2, 8-9, 13-14, 16-17,

20-21; 16:12-13, 18-19; 17:27-28; 18:10-11, 18-19, 20-21; 19:13-14,28-29; 20:16-17; 21:25-26,

30-31; 22:22-23, 24-25, 26-27; 23:13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 20-21, 24-25; 24:1-2, 3-4, 8-9, 13-14,

19-20,21-22,28-29; 25:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 16-17,21-22; 26:4- 5, 18-19,20-21;

27:1-2, 3-4, 15-16, 25-26; 28:25-26; 29:2-3.

210 Journal of Biblical Literature

Do not answer a fool according to his folly,

or you will be like him yourself.

Answer a fool according to his folly,

or he will be wise in his own eyes.

Although many refer to the contrary elements exhibited in this pair, few have

observed that this type of pairing is common; hence, they miss seeing this

as a molecular compositional unit.8 This particular example is also important

because all acknowledge that the relationship between these contrary juxta-

posed sentences results in a higher level of interpretation. It is beyond the

scope of this article to develop in detail how the pairing phenomenon affects

the interpretation of each of its sentential parts, although initial suggestions

will be made.

*Cohesion* Semantically, how is this pair bound together? This is an example of a

multi-catchword cohesion. The repetitional combination of תַּ֣עַן+ כְ֭סִיל +

כְּאִוַּלְתּ֑וֹ; cannot be accounted for by random probabilities, even given the high frequency of the wisdom vocabulary (כְּ֭סִיל; and כְּאִוַּלְתּ֑וֹ). The verb תַּ֣עַן is not overly frequent in Proverbs. NP, occurs in the initial position both times, further featuring the connection. Even by the word repetitions alone one is left with a strong feeling of equivalence constituting these two sentences as a pair.

The equivalence is varied syntactically by the presence of the prohibi-

tional negative אַל (26:4a), plus a jussive verb (תַּ֣עַן). Verse 5a drops the

negative and substitutes a simple imperative of the same verb (עֲנֵ֣ה), thereby

making the necessary grammatical transformations to create the resultant

contrariness.9 Syntactically, in both cases, the second person is addressed in

the first colon. Because of the predominance of elements of equivalence, the

syntactic shift in the second colon of v 5 should not be overlooked. Colon

4b continues the second person address, exposing the consequences for the

one who answers the fool as a result of violating the prohibition (26:4a).

8Crawford Toy does group it as a quatrain (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book*

*of Proverbs* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904] 473). McKane, *Proverbs*, 596; R. N. Whybray,

*The Book of Proverbs* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972) 152; Dermot Cox, *Proverbs with an*

*Introduction to Sapiential Books* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982] 216; Derek Kidner,

*The Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1964) 162.

R. B. Y. Scott does a nice job tying this pair into the contradictory proverbs phenomenon:

"Marry in haste and repent at leisure"; "Happy the wooing that is not long in doing" (*Proverbs,*

*Ecclesiastes* [AB 18; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965] 159). Cf. "Haste makes waste" and "He

who hesitates is lost."

9One should not overlook the brilliant work of Noam Chomsky on grammatical transforma-

tions (*Syntactic Structures* [The Hague: Mouton, 1957]; idem, *Studies on Semantics in Generative*

*Grammar* [The Hague: Mouton, 1972]). See also Jeanne Herndon, *A Survey of Modern*

Grammars [New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970]).

Hildebrandt: Proverbial Pairs 211

Colon 5b, however, shifts syntactically to the third person, thus revealing the

interpretational key to understanding the relationship between the two

contrary sentences. Verse 5b focuses on the reactions of the fool himself by

means of the third person pronominal suffix. Thus, v 5 states that if the fool

is answered, his arrogance will be exposed and he may be moved away from

it (third person focus). K. Hoglund's analysis is insightful-in pointing out

that being wise in one's own eyes is a "state worse than being a *ksyl*, since

one should undertake efforts to prevent the fool from being caught in such

self-evaluation."10 But v 4 cautions that you will face a personal risk and, very possibly, you will suffer damage by offering your rebuke to him (second

person focus). The elements of semantic equivalence heighten the focus on

syntactic difference demonstrating how the dynamic relationship between

the paired sentences unlocks the interpretation of this pair's contrariness.

The theme of the proverb closely flows from the semantic/syntactic

commonalities. The common theme addressed is the decision whether or

not one should answer a fool.

*Separateness*

Having examined the cohesive elements semantically, syntactically, and

thematically (highlighting elements of equivalence and difference), the

question that follows is: Is it a separate independent unit? We must look at

whether it is bonded to its context and, if it is linked to a neighboring

sentence whether that connection destroys the cohesive uniqueness and

independence of the pair itself.11

Proverbs 26:3 is also about the כְּסִילִֽים; (plural). However, the frequency

of this word does not diminish the unique tightness of 26:4-5. The dominant

use of metaphor (horse and bridle) is divergent from the nonmetaphorical

expression of 26:4-5. The thematic focus on answering a fool is also missing.

Proverbs 26:6 again involves the כְּסִֽיל, although its positioning (last)

does not link well with the common first colon position in 26:4-5. The

double metaphor in 26:6a (cutting off one's feet and drinking violence) is

quite dissimilar from the nonmetaphorical pair (26:4-5) but very similar to

26:7, which also links a leg metaphor and a fool. Using the fool as a messenger is quite different thematically from answering him. The fool is the common topic of discussion, loosely linking 26:3-12 into a larger cluster of which this pair (26:4-5) is one component. Thus, syntactically, semantically,

10Hoglund, "The Fool and the Wise in Dialogue," in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom*

*and the Psalms in honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm*. (ed. K. Hoglund et al.; JSOTSup 58;

Sheffield: JSOT, 1987) 168.

11See R. van Leeuwen, “The Problem of Literary Context in Proverbs 25-27: Structures,

Poetics, and Semantics" (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, 1984) for a

brilliant treatment of cohesive features in Proverbs 25-27.

212 Journal of Biblical Literature

and thematically Proverbs 26:4-5 stands as a pair loosely linked into a

larger cluster.

*A Syntactically Cohesive Pair: Proverbs 15:8-9*

Proverbs 15:8-9 is a very tight pair with stimulating semantic and

syntactic features.

זֶ֣בַח רְ֭שָׁעִים תּוֹעֲבַ֣ת יְהוָ֑ה וּתְפִלַּ֖ת יְשָׁרִ֣ים רְצוֹנֽוֹ׃

תּוֹעֲבַ֣ת יְ֭הוָה דֶּ֣רֶךְ רָשָׁ֑ע וּמְרַדֵּ֖ף צְדָקָ֣ה יֶאֱהָֽב׃

The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked,

but the prayer of the upright pleases him.

The LORD detests the way of the wicked,

but he loves those who pursue righteousness.

*Cohesion*

Semantically, this pair has a multi-catchword cohesion. Not only are

both sentences Yahweh sayings, but both also contain the noun phrase

תּוֹעֲבַ֣ת יְ֭הוָה, which is rare in this collection of Proverbs. Notice the positional variation of the noun phrase. In v 8a it is second, whereas in v 9a

it is in the initial position. The repetition of רָשָׁ֑ע, in v 8a and v 9a results in three out of the four words in the first colon being shared. This is rare, even though רָשָׁ֑ע, is a high-frequency word. Parallels are found also between the second cola. The winning of Yahweh's delight (v 8b: רְצוֹנֽו; + 3d masc. sg.

suffix) is parallel to the statement in which Yahweh's love is expressed to the one pursuing righteousness (v 9b: יֶאֱהָֽב, 3d masc. sg. V). The common word

pairs, יְשָׁרִ֣ים (v 8b) / צְדָקָ֣ה (v 9b) and רְצוֹנֽוֹ (v 8b) / יֶאֱהָֽב; (v 9b), add to the sense of cohesion between the two verses. Thus, although the bond between the second cola is not as repetitionally tight as between the first cola, the second cola do manifest parallelistic bonding. The cumulative effect of the semantic component is a clear pairing.

The syntactic relationships further enhance the cohesion of this pair.

Both first cola are verbless clauses and have the shared noun phraseתּוֹעֲבַ֣ת יְהוָ֑ה as the subject complement. In both first cola, the subject is a

two-unit noun phrase that constructs an item with the character quality of

the one possessing it (v 8a: זֶ֣בַח, [item] + רְ֭שָׁעִים; [character]/v 9a וּמְרַדֵּ֖ף,

[item] + צְדָקָ֣ה [character]). Whereas v 8a maintains isomorphic syntactical

relationships with its mate (v 8a/v 9a; verbless clause with 2 two-unit noun

phrases), v 8b is at variance with the syntax of v 9b. Looking deeper than the

surface syntax, however, one finds in both v 8b and v 9b a pronominalizing

of the subject--both having reference back to Yahweh in the first cola. The

predication takes place through the subject complement in v 8b, which

indicates God's pleasure over the prayers of the upright. In v 9b this same

type of approval (God's love) is predicated by means of an active verb. Thus,

Hildebrandt: Proverbial Pairs 213

the two proverbs are parallel on a deep level while the surface grammar

(noun versus verb) is different but transformationally related. Using M.

O'Connor's syntactic constraint analysis, both verses have the same 0 2 4//0

2 3 colonic movement, which is common in the proverbial sentences.12

Thematically both sentences address what pleases/displeases Yahweh.

This topic is rather rare in this collection. Verse 8 is varied by the addition

of cultic terms (sacrifice and prayer). Verse 9 employs the wisdom terms יְשָׁרִ֣ים,

and דֶּ֣רֶךְ. Though the two proverbs may come from quite different original

settings, they are beautifully mated on semantic, syntactic, and thematic

levels without losing the integrity and independence of the individual

sentences. Thus, this pair focuses one's attention on the depths of Yahweh's

evaluation, which looks beyond mere isolated cultic acts (sacrifice/prayer) to

the larger direction (wicked/righteous) of one's life. Thus, there may be an

apparent behavioral contradiction between a wicked one who offers a

sacrifice and the consistently evil way in which the wicked one goes through

life. In both cases, however, Yahweh's response is the same. Yahweh, the wise king, makes no mistakes; he is never fooled, so his evaluations of a person's actions (detests/loves) are to be feared and trusted.

*Separateness*

Now that it has been demonstrated that these two proverbs are clearly

and strongly bonded together, do they stand alone as a pair or are they part

of a larger string?

Prov 15:7 is loaded with high-frequency words characteristic of wisdom

(חֲ֭כָמִים / כְּסִילִ֣ים, שִׂפְתֵ֣י / לֵ֖ב), yet none of these words occurs in this pair

(15:8-9). Similarly, the verbal syntax is dissimilar from the verbless clauses

in v 8a/b and v 9a. The theme (the spreading of knowledge by wise/fools)

obviously does not connect directly with the theme of pleasing Yahweh. The

pair 15:8-9 is not connected to 15:7.

This pair is also separate from 15:10. Although דֶּ֣רֶךְ, (v 9a) may be seen

as a parallel to אֹ֑רַח (v 10a), these are high-frequency words and are used in

quite different settings in the two verses. Similarly, hating (v 10b) and loving

(v 9b) are a normal pair but the use is so divergent that it does not disrupt

the unity of 15:8-9. Although vv 10b and 9b are syntactically similar, v 10a

is quite different. Thematically, 15:10 addresses the issues of the reception

of and the reaction to discipline in normal wisdom terms with no reference

to Yahweh. It is thematically divergent, although according to 15:11 Yahweh

is the one cognizant of persons' hearts and the stern consequences awaiting

those who leave the path. Thus, there may be a cause/effect relationship

between the 15:8-9 pair and 15:10-11. Prov 15:10 does not disturb the

uniqueness and ability of the 15:8-9 pair to stand as a unit of composition.

12O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 138.

214 Journal of Biblical Literature

*A Non-catchword Pair: Proverbs 10:15-16*

When noting the structural connections between the sentences, many

have used solely the catchword phenomenon to indicate the rather loose and

meaningless way in which the proverbial patches are stitched together.13 Prov

10:15-16 is a good example of a non-catchword proverbial pair.

ה֣וֹן עָ֭שִׁיר קִרְיַ֣ת עֻזּ֑וֹ מְחִתַּ֖ת דַּלִּ֣ים רֵישָֽׁם׃

פְּעֻלַּ֣ת צַדִּ֣יק לְחַיִּ֑ים תְּבוּאַ֖ת רָשָׁ֣ע לְחַטָּֽאת׃

The wealth of the rich is their fortified city,

but poverty is the ruin of the poor.

The wages of the righteous bring them life,

but the income of the wicked brings them punishment.

*Cohesion*

Semantically, there is not a single word that is repeated in the sentences

of this pair. This difference is heightened by the presence of high-frequency

words (צַדִּ֣יק; רָשָׁ֣ע). Moreover, the abundance of economic terms could have

led to a natural repetition (ה֣וֹן, רָשָׁ֣ע, דַּלִּ֣ים, רֵישָֽׁם, פְּעֻלַּ֣ת, תְּבוּאַ֖ת). The

vocabulary seems to move from the realm of general economic status (10:15)

to more specific terms for wages/income (10:16), which then are modified by

moral terms (צַדִּ֣יק / רָשָׁ֣ע). Although there are no catchword repetitions, there

are strong economic word parallels.

Syntactically, both v 15a/b and v 16a/b are verbless clauses. In all four

cases the subjects are noun phrases composed of an item (wealth-related)

plus the one possessing it (NP = N:It + N[Adj]:Pos). In v 15 the possessors

are characterized by their economic status (עָ֭שִׁיר / דַּלִּ֣ים), but in v 16 the

possessors are characterized by their moral character (רָשָׁ֣ע / צַדִּ֣יק). In both

verses there are strong isomorphic syntactic relationships between the

members of the paralleled cola both on surface and deep structure levels.

The syntactic relationships of v 10:15a and v 10:15b are particularly interest-

ing in the crossover manner in which the pronominal suffixes are used. Verse

16 is a perfectly-formed syntactic isomorphism. The syntactic differences are

the use of pronominal suffixes in v 15 and the use of prepositional phrases

in v 16.

13R. E. Murphy has the best example of this method (*Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth,*

*Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981)). Others have attempted a

more macroscopic structural unity of the whole of Proverbs 10-29 (see P. W. Skehan, *Studies*

*in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom* [CBQMS 1; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1971]

and a rather inane supporting article by Stephen Brown ["Structured Parallelism in the Compo-

sition and Formation of Canonical Books: A Rhetorical Critical Analysis of Proverbs 10:1-22:16,"

Paper presented at the Thirty-Fourth Annual National Meeting of the Evangelical Theological

Society, 1982)). G. Bostrom (*Paronomasi I Den Aldre Hebreiska Maschallitteraturen*: *Med Sarskild Hansyn Till Proverbia* [Lund: Gleerup, 1928)) and others have done better.

Hildebrandt: Proverbial Pairs 215

This is a case in which theme plays a major role. Both are clearly

economic in nature--which the semantic level established just by the rich

treasury of economic terms used. There is a very strong similarity in the

common theme of the benefits/problems of wealth. In both cases there is a

positive evaluation of some aspect of wealth followed by a negative evalua-

tion. Verse 15 comments on the inherent benefits of wealth's ability to bring

security to the wealthy and on the plight of being poor. Lest one weigh

economic matters too heavily, v 16 is juxtaposed to bring ones thinking about

wealth back into the moral realm. Wealth without morality is death. Because

of the nexus of these two verses, one can see the necessity of wealth's being

accompanied by righteousness if one is to secure one's existence. Thus,

recognizing the pair as a collectional literary unit that is hermeneutically

interactive leads to a higher lever of interpretation and recognition of

canonical intent.

*Separateness*

Verses 13 and 14 are about the use of the tongue. There is some vocab-

ulary overlap with 10:15-16 in מְחִתַּ֖ת. The verbal clauses in both v 13 and v 14 contrast with the verbless clauses in the 10:15-16 pair. Thus, there is a slight connection to the preceding verses.

Another catchword does occur in 10:17, as Murphy well notes.14 Clearly

one of the isomorphic syntactic structures that welds 10:16 together is the

prepositional phrase featuring לְ + noun of life/destruction. When 10:17 picks

up the exact prepositional phrase, surely it is not just coincidental. So 10:17

is linked to 10:16 through a catchword, whereas there is no such bond

between 10:15 and 10:16. Is this pair, then, really a triad or a string?15 The

real distance between the themes of 10:15-16 and 10:17 should be noticed.

Verse 17 employs instructional wisdom vocabulary regarding the benefits of

keeping מוּסָ֑ר and the problems of forsaking תּוֹכַ֣חַת. This is standard didactic language and has no direct connection to the economic considerations of the preceding pair. Thus, although there is a catchword linking the 10:15-16 pair to what follows, it does not disturb the closeness of the pair. Verse 17 itself appears to be a transitional verse back to the theme of speech (10:18-21; cf. 10:13-14).

*A Positionally Cohesive Pair: Proverbs 13:21-22*

Prov 13:21-22 provides an example of the importance of position in

sentential pairing.

14Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 64. Murphy's comments on Proverbs 10ff. beautifully

highlight many of these thematic and catchword connections (pp. 68ff.).

15The demonstration of how Prov 10:1-11:1 is crafted together as a literary unit has been

proved elsewhere; see Ted Hildebrandt, "Proverbial Poetry: Its Setting and Syntax" (Th.D. diss.,

Grace Theological Seminary, 1985).

216 Journal of Biblical Literature

חַ֭טָּאִים תְּרַדֵּ֣ף רָעָ֑ה וְאֶת־צַ֝דִּיקִ֗ים יְשַׁלֶּם־טֽוֹב׃

ט֗וֹב יַנְחִ֥יל בְּנֵֽי־בָנִ֑ים וְצָפ֥וּן לַ֝צַּדִּ֗יק חֵ֣יל חוֹטֵֽא׃

Misfortune pursues sinners,

but prosperity is the reward of the righteous.

A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children,

but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.

*Cohesion*

Semantically, how are these two verses related? Verse 21 starts with the

same root word with which v 22 ends (חַ֭טָּאִים / חוֹטֵֽא). Because of the

frequency of this root, the repetition by itself would not indicate any strong

sense of cohesion. However, when the end of v 21 (ט֗וֹב) and the beginning

of v 22 have exactly the same word, a very interesting repetitional chiasm

occurs (חַ֭טָּאִים + ט֗וֹב // ט֗וֹב + חַ֭טָּאִים). It appears that the beginnings and

endings are key positions for such pairing.

Though the word roots themselves are repeated, they are varied mor-

phologically (חַ֭טָּאִים / חוֹטֵֽא). Likewise, ט֗וֹב in v 2lb refers to prosperity,

while in v 22a it means one's good character. This semantic difference--using

repetition as a means of variation--calls the reader to sharper discernment.16

That the repetition is accompanied by morphological variation (plural/singu-

lar) should not be overlooked.

The theme of prosperity/misfortune pursuing the righteous/sinner is

very frequent in this collection. Verse 22 has the righteous attaining material

benefits and even dispossessing the sinner.

Syntactically, v 21a contains an object noun which is an experiencer +

an active verb + a subject abstract noun which is the agent (Obj:N:Experi-

encer + V:Active + Subj:N:Agent). Isomorphically, v 21b also has the same

basic syntactic structure in the same order. In v 22a there is a subject noun

which is the agent + an active verb + an object noun phrase which

experiences the action of the verb (Subj:N:Agent + V:Active + Obj:NP:

Experiencer). Notice that the reversal of syntactic ordering, however, gives

ט֗וֹב its initial position. Verse 22b begins with a predicating passive participle + a prepositional phrase which has the experiencer (לַ֝צַּדִּ֗יק) + a subject noun phrase which is the patient. Placing the subject last makes the inclusio with the חטא root in v 21a. Prov 13:21-22 is a pair that highlights the features of the first and last positions and the interactive relationships and variations semantically which can take place even in repetitional catchwords.

*Separateness*

The preceding verse (13:20) thematically focuses on the character-

shaping impact of those one associates with. It is dominated by wisdom

16Susan R. Suleiman, "Redundancy and the 'Readable' Text," *Poetics Today* 1.3 (1980) 119-42.

Hildebrandt: Proverbial Pairs 217

terms, with no real connection to the character/consequence theme of the

following pair. Syntactically it is diverse and semantically there are no

catchwords or parallels.

Although 13:23 is about economics, which could link it to 13:22, the

differences demonstrate that it does not weaken the tightness of the 13:21-22

pair. There are no common catchwords, and the images of eating and a field

are distant from the more economically oriented terms used in v 22. Syntac-

cally they are also diverse.

Thus, 13:21-22 is a pair that is connected by means of significant

catchwords. The nexus, however, is due more to positional significance than

shared semantic meaning of the repeated words.

*A Thematically/Syntactically Tight Pair: Proverbs 15:1-2*

This final example, which will be commented on briefly, was picked

largely because of the absence of a catchword or direct semantic parallels

between word units. The connection takes place on the levels of syntax and

message/theme.

מַֽעֲנֶה־רַּ֭ךְ יָשִׁ֣יב חֵמָ֑ה וּדְבַר־עֶ֝֗צֶב יַעֲלֶה־אָֽף׃

לְשׁ֣וֹן חֲ֭כָמִים תֵּיטִ֣יב דָּ֑עַת וּפִ֥י כְ֝סִילִ֗ים יַבִּ֥יעַ אִוֶּֽלֶת׃

A gentle answer turns away wrath,

but a harsh word stirs up anger.

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge,

but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.

*Cohesion*

Clearly in 15:1-2 there are no shared catchwords, even with the

presence of high-frequency words (דְבַר, כְ֝סִילִ֗ים, פִ֥י, לְשׁ֣וֹן, דָּ֑עַת, חֲ֭כָמִים).

Obviously there are semantic relationships, but the point here is that they

are not directly on the word level.

Thematically, these two verses stand as a unit. Both address the power

of speech. The first focuses on the ability of speech to diffuse/stir up anger

and the second on its ability to distribute wisdom/folly. The tremendous

impact of words is the shared theme. The second verse fronts the speech

organ (פִ֥י / לְשׁ֣וֹן), while the first verse links the verbal expression (מַֽעֲנֶה /

דְבַר) to character qualities (רַּ֭ךְ/ עֶ֝֗צֶב), which determine the impact and

direction which that powerful oral expression will take.

Syntactically, it is interesting that the two sentences are isomorphic.

Recent discussions on parallelism have shown that restricting parallelism to

semantic categories (synonymous, antithetic, synthetic, emblematic) is

myopic. Parallelism also is syntactic in nature and interesting plays may be

seen when deep and surface grammatical variations and equivalences are

218 Journal of Biblical Literature

discovered.17 The question is: Are there syntactical parallels that bind the two

sentences together? Both can be classified by O'Connor's constraint system

as 1 3 4, which occurs in 20.9 percent of the cola in Proverbs 10-15. It should

be observed, however, that the 1 3 4 configuration in the "b" colon is quite

rare (18 times in Proverbs 10-15 as opposed to 59 times in the frontal

position). Thus, to have both verses with the 1 3 4 configuration in both "a"

and "b" cola is rare. The syntactic linkage manifests the same formulas that

isomorphically bind the cola of each sentence together and are shared

between the verses (Subj:NP [N + Qual] + Verb + Obj:N). One should not

fail to notice the repetition of hiphil imperfect in all four cola. These features all add to the feeling of sameness due to a shared syntactic architecture.

*Separateness*

The preceding verse (14:35) is about a servant's relationship to the king

(delight/wrath). There are no catchwords in common, and the theme and

syntax are diverse. Similarly, the following verse (15:3) is a Yahweh-saying

addressing the issue of his omniscience. There are no repetitional words, and

the theme and syntax (nonverbal versus verbal) are divergent.

Thus, 15:1-2 stands as a non-catchword pair. Nevertheless, it is bound

because of theme and syntax. It stands by itself and shows that bonding takes

place through a wider variety of means than is normally acknowledged. Even

the categories of semantics, syntax, and theme may be expanded

profitably--looking at phonetic linking patterns and structural bonding using

proverbial forms (e.g., 15:16-17).

*Summary*

These five examples have been chosen from many others in an attempt

to demonstrate a possible technique for isolating such pairs and for showing

the interactive categories used by the editors in building their collections.

What such categories of construction mean for interpretation is a subject

open for exploration. The goal of this study is simply to establish that binding

of individual sentences into pairs is a discrete level of composition that

should not be ignored in analysis.

17Perhaps the most insightful and comprehensive treatment yet produced is O'Connor's

*Hebrew Verse Structure*. The most concise and comprehensible has been Adele Berlin's *The*

*Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). Other excellent

works include Stephen Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (HSM 20; Missoula, MT:

Scholars Press, 1979); Wilfred Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*

(Sheffield: JSOT: 1984); E. Greenstein, "How Does Parallelism Mean?" in *A Sense of Text*

JQRSup; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982). Also see the writer's dissertation, which

correlated syntactic deep and surface structural relationships in the context of bi-colonic

parallelism (Hildebrandt, "Proverbial Poetry: Its Setting and Syntax").

Hildebrandt: Proverbial Pairs 219

V. Pairing Cohesional Principles

Having analyzed 124 verses that are bound into 62 pairs, what principles

of cohesion were discovered? What interesting patterns emerge on the levels

of semantics, syntax, and theme?

*Semantic Cohesion*

Several principles of semantic cohesion were observed. First, and

perhaps the most frequent and easily recognized, were catchword repeti-

tions. Such repetitions were often of high-frequency words.18 More significant

for this study was the occurrence of lower-frequency catchwords, making

coincidence a rather unlikely explanation.19 In Prov 26:20-21, for example,

there is a shared use of the low-frequency words מָדֽוֹן and אֵשׁ.

Multi-catchword parallels were perhaps the strongest argument for the

pairing phenomenon. This category of semantic identity virtually eliminates

the possibility of collectional coincidence. Numerous cases of multi-

catchwords were found (e.g., 14:26-27; 15:8-9; 23:13-14; 23:24-25; 26:4-5;

26:20-21).

Besides these obvious repetitions, cohesion in sentential pairs may also

take the form of parallel words from common word pairs characterized by

large areas of semantic overlap or by frequent pairing in the poetic corpus.20

Broader parallels may also exist, such as the use of Elohim in 25:2 and MyimawA

in 25:3, which is normally associated with Elohim (e.g., 24:3-4; 25:6-7).

So far the discussion has centered on the element of semantic sameness

linking the pairs together. How are those cohesional, semantically shared

elements varied? What processes of variation of the catchwords may be

18Examples of wisdom vocabulary and their use/misuse in attempts to find wisdom influence

outside of the wisdom corpus can be found in Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, 124-42, or in

R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom* (New York: Macmillan, 1971) 121-22. H. Deusberg and I.

Fransen offer an obese list with 200 words, which includes words that cannot be said to be

characteristic of wisdom (e.g., *dabar;’ elohim*, et al.) (*Les scribes inspires: Introduction aux livres*

*Sapientiaux de la Bible* [Belgium: Editions de Maredsous, 1966] 934-35). In the pairs, the follow-

ing catchwords were found: righteous (10:2-3), wicked (10:2-3), sinner (13:21-22), fool (12:15-

16), friend (14:20-21), king (16:12-13), woman (19:13-14), mouth (10:31-32), heart (15:13-14),

desire (21:25-26), Yahweh (21:30; 15:8-9), happy (23:24-25; 29:2-3; 15:20-21), and strife

(18:18-19). Murphy's *Wisdom Literature* beautifully exposes this feature in the proverbial

sentence literature.

19E.g., abomination (15:8-9), strong (18:10-11), imbibe (23:20-21), separate (25:4-5), gold

(25:11-12), wood (26:20-21), trust (28:25-26), searching (25:2-3), and fruit (18:20-21).

20 E.g., wealth/wages/income (10:15-16), tongue/lips/mouth (10:31-32), grace/lovingkindness

(11:16-17), hatred/despise (14:20-21), love/kindness (14:20-21), love/delight (15:8-9), lacking

judgment/fool (15:20-21), pride/haughty (16:18-19, from the same root), happy/rejoice (23:15-16),

heart/inner parts (23:15-16), no (lxa) / no (xlo) (23:17-18), house/rooms (24:3-4), wisdom/under-

standing/knowledge (24:3-4), or kings/nobles (25:6-7).

220 Journal of Biblical Literature

detected? Simple morphological variation may occur (רֶ֑שַׁע, [sg. ]/[Pl.] 10:2-3).

Linking words may be contrasted by constructing them with opposites.

Notice 10:31-32, where hp, is constructed with the צַ֭דִּיק in 10:31a, but in

10:32b it is constructed with the רְ֝שָׁעִ֗ים; (cf. 11:5-6 although less contrastive;

27:1-2; 12:18-19; 15:13-14). Another variational technique is the use of the

same word but with different components of its meaning (see the discussion

above on 13:21-22). The paralleling of words, rather than catchword repeti-

tion, is another variational technique. In 17:27-28, for instance, one sentence

uses a mouth part, whereas the other sentence uses the product of the mouth

(אֲ֭מָרָיו). Paralleled words may come from an equivalent root word but be

varied syntactically. For example, the noun form of a word may parallel the

verbal form of the same word root (16:18-19; 15:20-21; 13:7-8; 10:31-32).

Finally, the deep syntactic role of catchwords in the sentences may be very

diverse. The role of the אָב in 19:13-14 is quite diverse. In 19:13 he partici-

pates in receiving the brunt of his son's folly, whereas in 19:14 he is the agent

who gives an inheritance to his children. Similarly, in 19:28 the reference is

to the false witness who יָלִ֣יץ at justice (verb) and in v 29 the לֵּצִ֣ים (noun)

receives the punishment of justice.

In some cases the semantic parallels on the word level may be quite

weak or nonexistent (15:1-2; 17:27-28; 21:30-31; 22:22-23; 22:24-25;

24:13-14, 17-18, 21-22, 28-29; 26:18-19; 27:3-4, 15-16). Sometimes the

linking may take place through a larger rhetorical device or wisdom form, as

in the frequent cases of admonitional pairs, which are marked by the formula

אַל+ prohibition, כִּי + explanation (e.g., 24:1-2, 15-16, 19-20; 22:24-25;

23:18-19, 20-21, et al.). Two better-than proverbs are linked in 15:16-17 and

two simile proverbs in 10:25-26. Phonetic features seldom come into play

but may be present in 14:26-27 (also 14:20-21). Finally, there may be seman-

tically/syntactically mixed links. The repeated negative לֹא + hiphil verb is

a semantic/syntactic link in the 10:2-3 pair (see 24:28-29).

The placement of repeated terms is also significant in several pairs.

There is a strong tendency to place catchwords in initial positions of the first

cola of each sentence (10:2-3, 25-26; 11:5-6; 15:13-14; 16:12; 23:24; 25:4;

27:1). There may be linking in the initial positions of both second cola (15:16;

25:16-17). Occasionally the catchword is in the initial position of the first

colon of the first sentence and in the first word in the second colon of the

second sentence (18:19-20; 10:31-32). Other times there may be linking of

the initial position in the second colon of the first sentence and the first colon

of the second sentence (28:25-26). In 14:26-27, יִרְאַ֣ת יְ֭הוָה is put in the

initial position both times although varied in v 26 by the addition of the

preposition. More complex positional relationships can be seen in Prov

23:17-18; 13:21-22; 18:20-21; 24:8-9; and 25:6-7. An inclusio occurs when

the beginning initial position (חַ֭טָּאִים, 13:21a) links to the end of the second

sentence second colon (חוֹטֵֽא, 13:22b). A similar chiastic effect is seen in

23:17-18, where the initial position links tail (v 17b) to head (v 18a) and head

Hildebrandt: Proverbial Pairs 221

23:17-18; 13:21-22; 18:20-21; 24:8-9; and 25:6-7. An inclusio occurs when

the beginning initial position (חַ֭טָּאִים, 13:21a) links to the end of the second

sentence second colon (חוֹטֵֽא, 13:22b). A similar chiastic effect is seen in

23:17-18, where the initial position links tail (v 17b) to head (v 18a) and head

(v 17a) to the final position of the tail (v 18b). Last, the final position is

sometimes used to link the sentences (head to tail, both final, 25:6-7). Thus,

colonic endings and especially the initial positions are significant in the com-

positional process of linking paired sentences.

*Syntactic Cohesion*

Syntactically, how may sentences be bound into pairs? It should be

acknowledged that the syntactic linking is not as conclusive as the semantic

and thematic aspects. Nevertheless, it has been proved that syntactic linking

was utilized by the sage as he constructed the syntactically parallelistic bi-

colon as well as when he juxtaposed the sentences into pairs (see Prov 15:1f.;

26:4f.; 15:8f. above). Numerous pairs showed little or no syntactic paralleling

(e.g., 15:20-21; 18:20-21; 21:30-31; 22:22-23; 23:17-18; 25:2-3; 26:18-19;

27:1-2; 28:25-26; 29:2-3). Even though there may be surface syntactic

variation, there may be deep grammatical relationships which are transfor-

mationally related (see above on 26:4-5). In the second cola of Prov 15:8 and

9, for example, there is shared deep pronominal back-referencing to Yahweh,

but it is accomplished by means of two different surface syntactic means. In

v 8b it is through a pronominal suffix attached to a noun (רְצוֹנֽוֹ), whereas in

v 9b the back-referencing takes place through the third person of the verb

(יֶאֱהָֽב).

The two strongest means of syntactic bonding are direct dependence

and linking particles (e.g., פֶּן, in 24:17-18; כֵּ֤ן 24:13-14; and U 24:3-4). In Prov

22:24-25, the 3d masc. sg. pronominal suffix on אָרְחָתוֹ in v 25a points back

to the בַּ֣עַל אָ֑ף man of v 24. Thus, these sentences are dependent syntactically and must be taken as a pair because the second verse cannot stand by itself. This dependence phenomenon occurs in many of the paired admonitions (see 22:26-27; 23:13-14; 24:1-2, 21-22; 25:6-7, although not exclusively, e.g., 21:25-26). The back-referencing to the previous verse may occur by a pronominal suffix (22:27; 23:14; 24:22), by the person of the verb (22:27; 25:7), or by both methods (24:2).

Shared syntactic units are quite common and add to the feeling of

cohesion without demanding it. The shared medial waw in the first colon is

rather rare in these collections and the fact that two juxtaposed sentences

exhibit this same feature strongly suggests intentional pairing (10:25a/26a;

27:3a/4a; and 15:16b/17a). The heavy use of prepositions (26:20-21) and a

common preposition in conjunction with a verb (23:13-14) also give the

feeling of sameness.

Perhaps the most frequent syntactic unit that is shared as a result of the

high frequency of its usage is the two-unit noun phrase. Prov 12:18-19 has a

rather normal, thrice-repeated, parallel noun phrase construction composed

of a mouth part (tongue/lips/tongue) + a character quality (wise/true/false).

Here, as in 16:12-13, the shared noun phrase may repeat one catchword and

222 Journal of Biblical Literature

link it to another that is antithetical (delight of kings/abomination of kings;

10:31-32). In 16:12-13 the morphological repetition of the plural מְ֭לָכִים;

should not be overlooked (cf. 11:5-6; 15:13- 14). Antithesis is achieved in

Prov 10:31-32 by constructing shared words with antithetical mates in

parallel noun phrases (פִּֽי־צַ֭דִּיק / פִ֥י רְ֝שָׁעִ֗ים). In 15:8-9, however, the com-

mon noun phrases are varied morphologically (זֶ֣בַח רְ֭שָׁעִים, [pl.]/; דֶּ֣רֶךְ רָשָׁ֑ע,

[sg.]). There need not be a word repetition to link the two similarly con-

structed noun phrases. In Prov 15:1-2, the מַֽעֲנֶה־רַּ֭ךְ and לְשׁ֣וֹן חֲ֭כָמִים are

parallel noun phrases without a repeated catchword (cf. 10:15-16). Because

of the prevalence of NP forms in the sentential collections, such phenomena

bind, but may not be used as conclusive proof.

Syntactic bonding on the clause level strengthens the feeling of

coherence where multiple syntactical relationships are held in common.

Perhaps the most interesting example is in Prov 24:3-4. Not only are the

semantic parallels and developments related, but the isomorphic syntactic

structure between the two sentences is both rare and remarkably close. Verse

3a has the following syntactic formula Mod:PrepP (Prep + N) + V:Niphal

+ S:N. Several things are rather rare in this colon. First, there are no noun

phrases in this first colon verbal clause. Second, the use of the Niphal verb

with the subject trailing and prepositional phrase fronted is unusual. It is

interesting that v 4a has the exact same formula, even to the point of having

a niphal verb and the lack of two-unit noun phrases. Other examples of

isomorphic/homomorphic syntactic bonding between paired sentences may

be seen in Prov 15:1-2; 10:31-32; 13:21a/22a; and 25:16b/17b. Sometimes the connection may be simpler, as in 10:2-3 where the initial לֹא־ + verb:hiphil

links the two sentences. Quite often there are pairs with matching verbless

clauses (14:26-27; 10:15-16; 15:8-9; 18:10-11) where the two-unit noun

phrases appear paralleled. Because of the frequency of nonverbal clauses in

these collections, too much should not be made of this point; but, again, it

should not be ignored.

Syntax plays a unique role in giving the reader a feeling of sameness even

when the words are diverse. Because of the recent discovery and develop-

ment of the role of syntactic parallelism in bonding the poetic bi-colon

together, it is not unreasonable to have found that this method is also

employed to a limited extent in bonding sentential pairs.

*Thematic Cohesion*

Theme will be explored briefly using the categories that Alan Dundes

has made in attempting to define a proverb in modern folklore studies.21 A

21Dundes, "On the Structure of the Proverb," *Proverbium* 25 (1975) 961-73, reprinted in

Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes, *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb* (New York:

Garland, 1981) 43-64. This volume on paremiology is indispensable to anyone attempting to

unlock the nature and meaning of proverbial material. See also Wolfgang Mieder, *International*

Hildebrandt: Proverbial Pairs 223

proverbial sentence is composed of a topic and comment. It also has a

message, and often an image is used. Thus, theme will be looked at from

these four perspectives (topic/comment/message/image).

The topics of sentential pairs may be very close (11:5-6, צִדְקַ֣ת תָּ֭מִים /

צִדְקַ֣ת יְ֭שָׁרִים [cf. 21:25-26, where the topics are identical]) or more distant

(15:1-2, מַֽעֲנֶה־רַּ֭ךְ / לְשׁ֣וֹן חֲ֭כָמִים; cf. 12:18). Sometimes the topics may be

antithetically related (16:12-13, תּוֹעֲבַ֣ת מְ֭לָכִים / רְצ֣וֹן מְ֭לָכִים or developmen-

tal (13:21-22, ט֗וֹב / חֵ֣יל חוֹטֵֽא). Sometimes there may be no relationship

between the topics (10:2-3, אוֹצְר֣וֹת רֶ֑שַׁע / יְ֭הוָה, cf. 15:8-9).

The comments within the pairs may also be parallel. Likewise, they vary

in closeness from repetitional equivalence (15:8-9, תּוֹעֲבַ֣ת יְהוָ֑ה) to metaphor/

literal (10:15-16, קִרְיַ֣ת עֻזּ֑וֹ / חַיִּ֑ים), to a broader relationship (13:2-3, ט֑וֹב /

שֹׁמֵ֣ר נַפְשׁ֑וֹ). As with the topics, sometimes paired comments may use anti-

thetical relationships (16:12-13, תּוֹעֲבַ֣ת מְ֭לָכִים / רְצ֣וֹן מְ֭לָכִים The topics may be very similar while the comments are diverse (12:18-19, Topics: speech/speech; Comments: hurt/healing//longevity/vanishing) or the comments may be close with the topics somewhat diverse (15:8-9, Comments: abomination to Yahweh/abomination to Yahweh; Topics: wicked's sacrifice/wicked's way).

The images used in the pairs are seldom paralleled (10:15-16; 12:18-19;

13:2-3, although there are rare exceptions, 18:10-11, 20-21). Sometimes,

however, simply the fact that both juxtaposed proverbs use a metaphor/simile

binds them together (10:25-26; 14:26-27; 27:15-16) even though the images

are diverse. In one instance a metaphor was used in the pair, but in a

developmental manner (24:3-4, build house/fill room). When images are

used, quite frequently there is a movement from a metaphorical image to the

reality or application being discussed (25:4-5; 24:13-14; 25:16-17, not eating

too much honey/not visiting friends too long).

The message, or the deep movement between the topic and comment,

is often related in the proverbial pairs. Proverbs 11:5-6 shares the common

message that righteousness leads to success and wickedness to destruction.

The message relationship may be developmental, as in 10:15-16. Verse 15

states that wealth is better than poverty, and v 16 develops the idea by

showing that righteousness is better than wealth-thereby highlighting the

character of the one possessing the wealth as the key factor. Much more

could be done in terms of how the actual message is linguistically developed,

but these examples demonstrate that theme (topic/comment/image/message)

is used to tie proverbial pairs together.

VI. Conclusion

The sage attempted to order his world into poetically constructed

proverbial sentences by isolating and pulling the momentary threads of

*Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland. 1982) for a 527-page

annotated bibliography on international paremiological studies.

224 Journal of Biblical Literature

existence from the tapestry of Israelite society and framing them in

Yahwistically embroidered formal wisdom structures. He attempted to clarify

the complex confusion of the particulars of experience by highlighting life's

order through patterned universals. He crafted his perceptions and diverse

experiences into linguistic paradigms--the very literary form of which

reflected how he perceived the essential elements of life. Great linguistic/

poetic care was taken as he crafted his words into atomic proverbial bi-cola.

The sages then, with the same care, gathered those individual sentences into

collections. It is the crafting of the collectional level that may well reflect how

the sage moved from the unitary, digital elements of his existence into the

complex, analog flow of life. It has been suggested that as the transition is

made from the atomistic, proverbial sentence to the proverbial collection, the

proverbial pair stands as one molecular element at the collectional level. To

ignore higher levels of formal composition is to ignore meaning on that level.

It has been shown that the relationships between paired sentences are

complex and fascinating. Five examples out of 62 pairs (Prov 26:4-5; 15:8-9;

10:16-17; 13:21-22; 15:1-2) were proffered, as proof both that such a pairing

phenomenon exists and that the pairs are as beautifully crafted as the

individual sentences themselves. Such artistry goes far beyond the simple

catchword technique. It has been shown also that the pairs stand by

themselves as discrete units of composition.

The principles employed by the collectors were exposed under the

categories of semantics, syntax, and theme. Semantically, numerous exam-

ples of high frequency, low frequency and multiple catchwording eliminated

the disclaimer that such connections were just coincidental or unintentional.

Parallel words, with morphological or semantic variation, and positional

significance disclosed the intricate beauty of the pairs. Syntax was another

method by which a feeling of cohesion in the paired sentences was achieved.

While many pairs showed no syntactic cohesion, many did through the

bonding of syntactic dependence or linking particles. Shared syntactic units

--especially the two-unit noun phrase, medial waw, and heavy use of prepo-

sitions--added to the feeling of sameness. On the clause level, frequently

there were homomorphic/isomorphic syntactic parallels between the respec-

tive paired cola. Thematic bonding was briefly analyzed and interrelation-

ships explored from the perspectives of common topics, comments, images,

and message.

This paper has demonstrated that the proverbial pair is a unit of com-

position by which the proverbial collectors welded the atomistic proverbial

sentences into larger units. The fact that such compositional units were used

suggests that the proverbial sentences should be examined from collectional

as well as sentential perspectives.