WISDOM AS DIVINE DISCOURSE: AN EXEGETICAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

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APPROVAL SHEET

WISDOM AS DIVINE DISCOURSE: AN EXEGETICAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

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For Sylvia, Evangeline, and Benjamin.

To the glory of God.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
BBRSup	Bulletin for Biblical Research, Supplement
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
JANESCU	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
JTISup	Journal for Theological Interpretation, Supplements
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	New American Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*

VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestanentliche Wissenschaf*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

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PREFACE

The theological process of finding a home for wisdom in Old Testament theology is an arduous one. I am thankful for many people God has brought into my life to make the journey delightful and meaningful. First, I am grateful to my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Duane A. Garrett. His patience, insights, and exegetical acumen have been my מוסר ("discipline and instruction") in keeping me on the straight path in writing this dissertation. I am indebted to Dr. Garrett's model of a life of wisdom for me (Prov 4:1–7). Second, I am grateful to Dr. Gregg R. Allison, Dr. Terry J. Betts, and Dr. Anne Stewart (my external reader) for their constructive comments and generous encouragement on my defense draft. Third, I thank God for the brothers and sisters in Christ who have supported my academic journey in many ways: Rev. Dr. Henry Baldwin, Dr. Walter McConnell, Rev. Dr. Martus Maleachi, Allen and Barbara Kannapell, Fenny Tjin, and many others. Their love and support enable me to complete my doctoral studies and keep the Church and her mission a constant focus in my writing. Finally, I am thankful to my wife, Sylvia, for her love, patience, and enduring support through these years of study. She is my אשׁת־חיל ("woman of strength") who accompanies me on this journey of seeking wisdom in fear of the Lord.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The assertion that Old Testament (OT) wisdom appears to be an alien and awkward fit to OT theology has become, ironically, proverbial.[1] The claim concerning the awkwardness of OT wisdom is predicated on perceived tensions between divine and human agency.[2] In the study of Proverbs, two interrelated areas exemplify these tensions: the nature of wisdom's epistemology and the relationship between divine and human agency in the Proverbial sayings.[3] In the latter case, the tension becomes more apparent in recent studies on moral agency—the discussion on whether human beings possess innate "ability to choose to act one way or another."[4] I will delineate the nature of these tensions below.

First, scholars have set OT wisdom in contrast to two dominant views of divine revelation: revelation in history (i.e., revelation through events) and prophetic revelation

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[1] James Crenshaw describes OT wisdom literature as the "orphan in the biblical household," "virtually ignored as an entity" until the beginning of the twentieth century. James L. Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, Library of Biblical Studies (New York: Ktav, 1976), 1.

[2] John Coert Rylaarsdam notes that the wisdom movement is "dealing with the perennial tensions between human freedom and divine transcendence." John Coert Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 56.

[3] I am using epistemology in a broad sense of "how people come to know what they know" instead of a theoretical system of knowledge acquisition.

[4] Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live? The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel*, BZAW (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 8.

(i.e., revelation through speech).[5] The former is characterized by a revelation of God's mighty acts in history and the latter on divine speech as mediated through the prophets.[6]

In contrast to revelation through history, wisdom is said to operate not in the arena of Israel's particularistic history but in the universal experience of human beings in creation.[7] This contrast between OT history and wisdom—which can be traced back to the antithesis between wisdom and theocracy in Immanuel Kant's thinking[8]—is said to lie primarily in the differences of their subject matters on the one hand and their concepts of divine intervention on the other. Regarding the subject matters of OT wisdom, R. N. Whybray states, "The common interest in these books [Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes] is an interest in the problems of human life; not the political problems of the nation of Israel, which, though of gigantic and tragic proportions, are never referred to here, but the problems of ordinary individual citizens."[9] With regard to the differences in concepts of divine intervention, several scholars emphasize the lack of divine intervention in wisdom—especially the notion of divine intervention as understood in Israel's historical narratives.[10]

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[5] To the question of how biblical wisdom fits into the theology of the Old Testament, Roland Murphy notes that "the usual approach in Old Testament theology is by way of the biblical record of God's revelation to the people by prophets and deeds—the rigid axis of history—which leaves little room for wisdom literature." Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 112.

[6] For a discussion on prophetic revelation, see below.

[7] James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 44, 182; cf. R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* (New York: Collier, 1986), 133–35; Christa Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1–9: eine Form- und motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter Einbeziehung ägyptischen Vergleichsmaterials* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966), 85.

[8] The contrast between wisdom and theocracy (the nationalistic and ritualistic religion of the Jews) germinated on the soil of Kantian philosophy. See Will Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 87–98.

[9] R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*, BZAW (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), 69.

[10] For example, Walther Zimmerli notes that while wisdom refers to YHWH as the Lord of creation, it does not mention YHWH's "particular involvement in the history of Israel." It was not until the Wisdom of Sirach that wisdom included "Yahweh's involvement with Israel." Walther Zimmerli, *Old*

The alleged absence of divine intervention in OT wisdom has influenced the understanding of its epistemology.[11] Wisdom is said to stand in contrast to the prophetic mode of revelation. According to common understanding, prophetic revelation is characterized as verbal communication from God to human agents. In contrast, wisdom is the product of human reason through observation and experiential reflection,[12] albeit scholars disagree on the relationship between human reason and divine revelation. Notably, Johann F. Bruch established the notion that Hebrew wisdom is a philosophy based on human reason with loose attachments to revelation. Accordingly, the Israelite sages, being dissatisfied with the theocratic ideas of the prophets and the priests, promoted the way of free thought (*freien Denkens*).[13] G. F. Oehler also follows Bruch's understanding of the origin of Hebrew wisdom. He stressed that unlike the law and the prophets, wisdom does not attribute its matters to "direct divine causation"; rather, *hokmah* is the product of the sages' "own experience and thought" and not "a word of God in the stricter sense of the term."[14] In Oehler's view, though wisdom is not derived from revelation, it is, nevertheless, based on a cognitive reflection upon the "the world

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Testament Theology in Outline, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), 158. Similarly, Walter Brueggemann asserts that the wisdom traditions "are reluctant to speak about the intervention of God. He never comes abruptly in Proverbs." Walter Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1972), 62.

[11] I am using epistemology to refer to how the sages came to their knowledge and expressed it in their writings. This by no means suggest that OT wisdom aims to describe its epistemology in a systematic manner.

[12] Horst D. Preuss, "Das Gottesbild Der Älteren Weisheit Israels," in *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel*, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., VTSup 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 117–45; John J. Collins, "The Biblical Precedent for Natural Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, no. 1 (1977): 70; Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*, 120; Franz-Josef Steiert, *Die Weisheit Israels—ein Fremdkörper im Alten Testament? Eine Untersuchung Zum Buch der Sprüche auf dem Hintergrund der Ägyptischen Weisheitslehren*, Freiburger theologische Studien 143 (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1990).

[13] Johann F. Bruch, *Weisheits-Lehre der Hebraier: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie* (Strassbourg, France: Treuttel & Würtz, 1851), x, 49. Kynes has helpfully traced the coinage of the "wisdom category" to Bruch. See especially Kynes's discussion of Bruch in Kynes, *Obituary*, 85–90.

[14] Gustav Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), 538.

presented by revelation."[15] In contrast, C. Piepenbring objects to Bruch's and Oehler's casting of wisdom as a philosophy distinct from divine causation or revelation. Instead, Piepenbring distinguishes between objective wisdom—the spirit and the word of God—and subjective wisdom—the wisdom of Israel's sages. Piepenbring contends that objective wisdom—taken as an "emanation from God"—was the source of the sages' subjective wisdom.[16] In spite of Piepenbring's rebuttal, his distinction between the objective and subjective wisdom perpetuates the notion that wisdom is something other than prophetic revelation (i.e., the word of God). Bruch's and Oehler's depiction of wisdom as fundamentally empirical remains relatively unfazed.

As the debate between Piepenbring and Oehler-Bruch demonstrates, the enigma of how Hebrew wisdom can be both a "gift of God" and, at the same time, based on human reasoning would persist in wisdom studies.[17] With human observation and experience (i.e., empiricism) perceived as its core epistemology, wisdom, then, is thought of as the fountainhead of natural/creation theology, which, justifiably, is also a divine gift and belongs in the Bible.[18] Some scholars would continue to refer to wisdom as a form of revelation (*Offenbarung*) that springs from creation but maintain that wisdom is distinct from prophetic revelation.[19] Others would speak of wisdom as a form of charismatic

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[15] Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 538.

[16] C. Piepenbring, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. H. G. Mitchell (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1893), 325–31.

[17] Leo Perdue recognizes the scholarly struggle to resolve the tension of wisdom as "a gift of God" and as "an object for human striving" and argues that this tension is best treated as a dialectic. See Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 29.

[18] Zimmerli grounds the legitimacy of wisdom's empiricism in God's creation of humanity as an independent creature with the "right to master the world." Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (1964): 152–53. See also Weeks's discussion on empiricism and natural theology. Stuart Weeks, *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 114–17.

[19] Zimmerli notably contends that both creation and prophecy are mediums of God's revelation, whereas Gerhard von Rad specifies wisdom as the "self-revelation of creation." See W. Zimmerli, "Erwägungen zur Gestalt einer alttestamentlichen Theologie," in *Studien zur alttestamentlichen Theologie und Prophetie*, Theologische Bücherei 51 (Munich: Kaiser, 1974), 46–51, cited in Murphy, *Tree*

human ability endowed by God.[20] Among those who view wisdom as a charismatic gift, scholars differ in their emphasis on whether wisdom is more of a divine gift or a human ability.[21]

Nevertheless, the characteristic difference between wisdom and revelation is said to be the absence of divine speech in wisdom. Commenting on the characteristics of early wisdom (Prov 10–31), John Coert Rylaarsdam states that "their manner of obtaining wisdom differs from that of the prophets. Since there is no divine initiative supplementing creation, there is no word of God beyond that given by human reason; and the deliverances of reason are not called the 'word' of God."[22] Michael Fox, however, asserts that the absence of divine word is characteristic of all Proverbial wisdom and not simply a mark of the earlier strata of wisdom: "Lady Wisdom speaks wisdom—her own, not God's . . . . Since Wisdom did not receive a specific message from God, her role is better described as an alternative to revelation."[23] The absence of divine speech (i.e., prophetic revelation) in OT wisdom then becomes an influential criterion for determining wisdom's influence on non-wisdom texts.[24]

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of Life, 122; Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 144–76. Like von Rad, Murphy also conceives wisdom as a revelation of God. Wisdom "is the divine summons issued in and through creation, sounding through the vast realm of the created world and heard on the level of human experience." Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 55; cf. Murphy, "Wisdom and Creation," *JBL* 104, no. 1 (March 1985): 9–10.

[20] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 67–74; William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 60; von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 54, 296; Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18B (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 947–51.

[21] Contrast Rylaarsdam and Fox's views. See Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 56; Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 950.

[22] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 72.

[23] Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 949–50; See also Gerlinde Baumann, "Personified Wisdom: Contexts, Meanings, Theology," in *The Writings and Later Wisdom Books*, ed. Christl M. Maier and Nuria Calduch-Benages, The Bible and Women: An Encyclopaedia of Exegesis and Cultural History (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 59; Alice M. Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom* (2005; repr., London: Routledge, 2017), 73; J. A. Loader, *Proverbs 1–9*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 117–18.

[24] James L Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon Historical Literature," *JBL* 88, no. 2 (1969): 129–42; Michael V. Fox, "Wisdom in the Joseph Story," *VT* 51, no. 1 (2001): 38n43.

In sum, scholars tend to construe wisdom as a contrast to revelation in history and prophetic revelation—both historical and prophetic elements of the OT are also known as Yahwism.[25] Typically, wisdom takes on an anthropocentric focus in contrast to the theocentrism of the Torah and the Prophets.[26] As we will see below, such a view of wisdom's relation to revelation would indelibly affect the construal of the relationship between divine and human agency within the book of Proverbs.

Second, the tensions between the divine and human agency in the book of Proverbs are manifest in the various attempts to account for the "theologization" of anthropocentric wisdom. Since early wisdom (Prov 10–29) is thought of as human wisdom, scholars like Gerhard von Rad have sought to account for how anthropocentric wisdom became integrated with "theological wisdom" (Prov 1–9) at a later stage.[27] Others have aimed to reconcile the Yahwistic (religious) and non-Yahwistic (secular) sayings within Proverbs.[28] Though seen largely as formal differences between aphorisms in Proverbs, these tensions are thought to exist because wisdom (considered to be a human enterprise) is perceived as incompatible with divine agency.[29] Lennart Boström

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[25] Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom and Yahwism," in *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of John L. Mckenzie*, ed. James W. Flanagan and Anita W. Robinson (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 117–26; Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 197; Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom and Yahwism Revisited," in *Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, David Penchansky, and Paul L. Redditt (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 191–200.

[26] For example, Brueggemann suggests that biblical wisdom depicts a dimension of biblical faith whereby the emphasis is not on pleasing God—as in the Deuteronomic-Prophetic tradition—but on God's taking pleasure in human strength and ability. See Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust*, 45–46. For similar views, see also Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," 147; John F. Priest, "Where Is Wisdom to Be Placed?," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, Library of Biblical Studies (New York: Ktav, 1976), 281–88.

[27] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper, 1962), 1:441–53.

[28] R. N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9*, Studies in Biblical Theology (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1965), 72–104; McKane, *Proverbs*, 10–22; Whybray has since repudiated such a view. See R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs*, New Century Bible Commentary (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 8–9.

[29] There is a tendency to construe wisdom (a human enterprise, which may be divinely inspired) as distinct from divine action. See Arndt Meinhold, "Gott und Mensch in Proverbien 3," *VT* 37, no. 4 (1987): 468–77. Meinhold states, "Im normalen Gang des ganzen Lebenskönnte die Weisheit in

has addressed the problem of relegating God's place to the periphery of wisdom's thought in his seminal work *God of the Sages*, thus underscoring the severity of this issue in modern wisdom scholarship.[30] More recently, discussions on human agency in wisdom literature have turned their attention to moral philosophy or moral agency, prompted by interests in virtue ethics and creation theology.[31] Scholars typically think of Proverbs as espousing an optimistic view of human ability within limits.[32] More recent studies by Anne Stewart, however, have challenged the prevailing optimistic view by formulating wisdom's view of moral agency as a confluence of external and internal agencies.[33] Accordingly, learning wisdom is contingent on *both* personal dispositions toward wisdom

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Gestalt von Umsicht und Besonnenheit (V.21b) Sicherheit gewähren. Aber gegen plötzlich auftredendes Unglück müßte und würde JHWH selbst dem Weisheitsschüler zur Seitestehen (V.26a)" (p. 470).

[30] Lennart Boström has made a significant contribution to wisdom studies by elevating the place of God in the book of Proverbs. Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*, ConBOT (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990). Frederick Wilson asserts that the theological affirmations are integral to the book of Proverbs and are grounded "in the basic belief that wisdom is to be viewed as torah-divine instruction that may be ignored only at one's peril." Frederick M. Wilson, "Sacred and Profane? The Yahwistic Redaction of Proverbs Reconsidered," in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy, O.carm.*, ed. Kenneth G. Hoglund et al., JSOTSup 58 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1987). See also Zoltán S. Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of the Book of Proverbs: Selfishness and Secularity Reconsidered*, JTISup (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 128–59.

[31] Carol Newsom notes that the subject of moral psychology in the OT has been in neglect until recently. Carol A. Newsom, "Models of the Moral Self: Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism," *JBL* 131, no. 1 (2012): 5–25. For the significance of virtue ethics to the study of OT wisdom, see William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); John Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 65–74; M. Daniel Carroll R. and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds., *Character Ethics and the Old Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); Bruce C. Birch, "Moral Agency, Community, and the Character of God in the Hebrew Bible," *Semeia* 66 (1994): 23–41.

[32] For example, Rylaarsdam states that such optimism "assured that, despite his limitations, man can discover the nature of what determines his destiny to such an extent that he can obtain what he deems essential to his happiness." Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 47. Kathleen O'Connor asserts that "proverbial wisdom assumes that people are capable of choosing, are free to choose, indeed, must choose their own course of action in life." Kathleen M. O'Connor, *The Wisdom Literature*, Message of Biblical Spirituality (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 40. Graeme Goldsworthy perceives this freedom of choice as consonant with God's gift of wisdom. See Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Wisdom* (Paternoster Press, 1987), 80. See also Lindsay Wilson, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 10. Notably, Klaus Koch's opposes any notion of divine retribution in Proverbs and attributes causation of good or bad fortune to human agents. See Klaus Koch, "Gibt Es Ein Vergeltungsdogma Im Alten Testament?," *ZTK* 52, no. 1 (1955): 1–42.

[33] Anne W. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 98–99. See also Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics*, 67–68.

and responses to external causes. However, in Stewart's studies, the role of God in moral agency is not emphasized. Admittedly, one should not expect the agency of God to be of prime significance in Stewart's work, which focuses on the exploration of human moral agency. Nevertheless, when Stewart's work is viewed in the context of a conversation that treats divine and human agency as conflicting, it is important to further explicate YHWH's role in the moral agency of Proverbs.[34]

The loss of the concept of wisdom as a divine speech (i.e., the word of God) poses major challenges for the integration of divine and human agency in the book of Proverbs. The twin problems of wisdom's epistemology and the dichotomies of divine and human agency within Proverbs are arguably the result of the loss of the operative notion of divine agency throughout the biblical text.

The ebb of this operative notion of divine agency owes a large part—but is not limited to—Kantian philosophy, which has exerted great influence on the modern study of OT wisdom.[35] The primacy of human autonomy is key to Kant's thought.[36] However, according to Kant, human autonomy is incompatible with divine agency. And according to Christopher Insole's summation of Kant's philosophy, "where we act, God does not act . . . . Otherwise, it would not be our action."[37] This dichotomy of human and divine agency has several ramifications in wisdom studies. Kant precludes the "operational" effect of God's agency (i.e., divine assistance through inspiration or revelation) on the

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[34] See Stewart's article on moral agency. Anne W. Stewart, "Moral Agency in the Hebrew Bible," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion, November 22, 2016, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.92. See also Lapley's discussion. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, 58.

[35] See Kynes's discussion on the acknowledged influence of Kant's philosophy on the modern conception of wisdom literature. Kynes, *Obituary*, 87–89.

[36] According to J. B. Schneewind, Kant's conception of self-governance "was fuller and more radical than any other" in that "he alone was proposing a truly revolutionary rethinking of morality" by arguing that "we are self-governing because we are autonomous." J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6.

[37] Christopher J. Insole, *The Intolerable God: Kant's Theological Journey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 126.

knowing subject since (1) the concept of God can only be understood through reason alone and (2) the operational influence of God's agency on the knowing subject would infringe the freedom to think.[38] OT wisdom studies, when filtered through a modernist philosophy, inadvertently privilege human reason over and against the mediation of the divine. In this way, interpretations of OT wisdom preclude appeals to metaphysical and ontological claims as hermeneutically relevant insights. As such, scholarly investigations are limited to "immanent categories and experience."[39] For example, the Yahwistic sayings in Proverbs have been read in a context distinct from the rest of the aphorisms[40] and confined to interpretations within immanent categories of tradition, religion, culture, or common sense.[41] Hence, the relegation of divine agency to the periphery of Proverbial wisdom is a logical and philosophical outworking of the eclipse of divine agency in the wisdom text. There is a need to recover the operational effects of God's agency in the biblical wisdom text (and of all scriptural texts) as the word of God. Intimating the importance of divine agency in wisdom, Mark Sneed observes perceptively, "A notion of divine inspiration for the sages needs further attention by wisdom experts. Even if the instructions and aphorisms of the wise are based primarily on experience, this still does not exclude the notion of inspiration."[42]

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[38] Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15–16.

[39] Mark A. Bowald, *Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics: Mapping Divine and Human Agency* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 24. Bowald rightly points out that in Kant's advocacy of the autonomy of the knowing subject (free from external influences that might affect one's judgment), Kant only allows for a "notional" (i.e., an informational knowledge of the nature and essence of things in relative distance to its operational aspect) appeal to God's agency in the world as long as such an appeal results in the pursuit of the higher good (p. 14).

[40] See Stuart Weeks's discussion. Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 63.

[41] See for example, Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Bible and Literature (Decatur, GA: Almond, 1985), 158–64; Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 963–76; Loader, *Proverbs 1–9*, 35–36.

[42] Mark R. Sneed, "'Grasping after the Wind:' the Elusive Attempt to Define and Delimit Wisdom," in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies*, ed. Mark R. Sneed, Ancient Israel and Its Literature (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 46.

On closer investigation, the alleged strict contrast between wisdom, divine action in history, and prophetic revelation does not hold. Roland Murphy has rightly sought to correct a tradition of doing OT theology in a way that pits wisdom against "the rigid axis of history."[43] He argues that OT wisdom is as historical as *Heilsgeschichte*, albeit with a focus on the reality of everyday experience.[44] Divine activity is not limited to the historical and the prophetic since wisdom and Yahwism share the view that "the world is the showcase for divine activity" since "it is not contemplated in and for itself, but in relation to the creator and to living things that occupy it."[45] Wisdom also shares Yahwism's view of human experience as both a gift of God and "inseparable from the experience of God."[46] Moreover, the inadequacy of humankind's ability to draw inferences from creation to God, as underscored by Jewish wisdom literature such as Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach, cast further doubt on the legitimacy of a "natural theology" in Proverbs that stems from empiricism.[47]

Despite various correctives offered against a strict distinction between wisdom and Yahwism, there have been few attempts to reinstate the place of divine speech in wisdom.[48] Recent discussions on the divine inspiration of wisdom have aimed to restore the emphasis on divine agency in contrast to the earlier emphasis on human ability.[49] However, the concept of inspiration lacks the specificity of divine discourse to anchor

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[43] Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 112.

[44] Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 113.

[45] Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 119.

[46] Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 120.

[47] Weeks, *Introduction to Wisdom Literature*, 115.

[48] Arguing from wisdom's "counsel" being grounded in divine authority and the meaning of *mashal*, Brian Kovacs states that wisdom is "authoritative dabhar, the word of Yahweh." Brian W. Kovacs, "Is There a Class-Ethic in Proverbs," in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics (J. Philip Hyatt, in Memoriam)*, ed. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis (New York: Ktav, 1974), 185.

[49] Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 76–83; Kynes, *Obituary*, 235–37.

wisdom in divine action.[50] The normal usage of the term "inspiration" (with the exception of a dictation view of inspiration) is that God superintends the human authorship of a particular text. However, divine superintendence does not necessarily lead to the attribution of a discourse to divine agency. As Nicholas Wolterstorff puts it,

> The fact that X inspires Y to write as Y does, even to the extent of the very words Y uses, is compatible both with the resultant words being the medium of X's discourse and with the resultant words being the medium of Y's discourse. Inspiration accounts for the existence of the discourse-generating events; inspiration does not determine the agent of the discourse generated.[51]

When seen merely as a divine endowment of charismatic abilities, divine inspiration is another way to legitimize human agency rather than reinstating the importance of divine agency. Inspired wisdom is a divinely endowed human ability that continues to exclude the operative notions of divine agency within the text. To the dismay of scholars who hope that an appeal to divine inspiration would anchor wisdom in divine activity, divine inspiration simply does not exert enough force in the current academic milieu to shift the center of gravity toward divine agency.

More importantly, the exclusion of divine speech from wisdom is due to the reduction of revelation to certain modes of communication on the one hand and the perceived antithesis between divine speech and wisdom on the other. In an essay on the revelation of Scripture, Paul Ricœur complains about the equation of revelation and a dictationary view of divine communication: "We over-psychologize revelation if we fall back on the notion of scripture as dictated in a literal fashion."[52] Fox seems to be aware of the problem of reducing revelation to prophetic communication when he avers that "a revelation could be an individual visionary experience or communication with no

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[50] In his articulation and defense of revelation and inspiration of wisdom, Waltke nevertheless employed the phrase "inspired utterance." Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 81–82.

[51] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 283–84.

[52] Paul Ricœur and Lewis S. Mudge, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 93.

national or covenantal concerns."[53] However, Fox maintains that divine verbal communication, a feature of prophetic revelation, is absent in wisdom.[54] Fox's conception that wisdom does not speak YHWH's words becomes an influential paradigm for differentiating wisdom from divine speech. Similarly, J. A. Loader, preferring to speak of a "deficiency of revelation" in wisdom rather than the absence of revelation, perceives the difference between wisdom and "ordinary" revelation to be a matter of the absence of divine speech (see figure 1).[55]

Revelation	Wisdom
Hear > Yahweh	Observation/experience > interrelationships > order > creation > Creator > Yahweh

Figure 1. Epistemological difference between revelation and wisdom

Logically, the equation of divine speech with direct verbal communication is problematic when one attempts to explain the notion of "God speaking" in a literal sense. To what speech organ should one attribute the production of God's word? The difficulty of grasping the sense of God speaking should caution one from conflating divine speech with literal verbal communication. If one concedes that divine speech is anthropomorphic imagery for divine communication, then it is not necessary to limit this imagery to literal verbal communication between God and human agents. Furthermore, just as divine communication need not entail direct verbal communication, divine revelation does not

[53] Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 948.

[54] Similarly, Brueggemann perceives wisdom teaching as devoid of any God-talk. Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust*, 51.

[55] Loader, *Proverbs 1–9*, 39.

necessarily entail the actual hearing of direct divine utterance, though divine utterance is most commonly associated with divine revelation. For example, YHWH's act of revelation is described as a revelation to the ear (גלה את־אזן) of David even though the divine words were spoken *through* mediated speech (2 Sam 7:27; contrast with Isa 22:14).[56] More importantly, the Torah and the Prophets do not conflate divine speech (i.e., the words of YHWH) with direct verbal communication. As Sneed notes, "Prophets, the gurus of inspiration, also drew on life experiences for their arguments and appeals. Not every word of a prophet was considered verbatim citation of God. In fact, little of the prophetic material fits that description."[57] This raises important questions concerning whether the concept of revelation, defined strictly as prophetic revelation wherein human agents are passive recipients of revelatory content, can adequately account for all notions of divine discourse in the Bible.

It is also important to consider that the antithesis between wisdom and divine speech rests on a false dichotomy between divine speech and human agency. While scholars like Gerhard von Rad and Leo Perdue have opted for a dialectical approach to the divine and human elements of wisdom, the divine and the human are still perceived as in tension with each other.[58] If I may paraphrase Sneed's comments above, could not divine speech be compatible with human reason, observation, and even experience? Could not OT wisdom be an instance of such compatibility provided that divine speech is not reduced to direct verbal communication between God and humans?

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[56] Yael Avrahami notes that the making known of something is described as a revelation to the ears even in the absence of the actual hearing of what is revealed. See Yael Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture: Sensory Perception in the Hebrew Bible*, LHBOTS (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 118.

[57] Sneed, "'Grasping after the Wind,'" 46–47. For example, Jeremiah's prayer (Jer 14:7–9) belongs to the דבר יהוה אל ירמיהו (v. 1).

[58] Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 47–48. Perdue follows von Rad's dialectical treatment of anthropology and theology in early and late wisdom but rejects von Rad's diachronic approach. See von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:418–81. For a similar view to Perdue, see Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 129.

Early Jewish and Christian references to Solomon as a prophet as well as Midrash Proverbs' attribution of the father's words to God's words may attest to a broader view of prophetic revelation than what modern scholars have claimed (cf. Heb 1:1).[59] More importantly, the inclusion of revelatory materials in the OT wisdom literature, such as the divine speeches in Job 38–41 and the oracles (המשׂא) of Agur, suggests that wisdom is not antipathic toward divine revelation.[60] As such, Proverbs may testify to a much more cohesive relationship between divine and human agency in relation to divine communication than modern scholars have allowed.

One ramification of construing wisdom as void of divine speech is that divine speech is no longer considered integral to understanding how wisdom functions. As such, the statement "the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth [comes] knowledge and understanding" (Prov 2:6) is often interpreted in a way that dismisses divine speech as the source of wisdom,[61] even though, arguably, the פה of יהוה most frequently refers to divine speech.[62] Agur's confession of human limitation in search of wisdom and his reliance on the veracity of אמרת אלוה ("words of God") in Proverbs 30:1–6 are marginalized and treated as non-essential elements of Proverbial wisdom.[63] Outside of Proverbs, Fox's argument that Ecclesiastes 12:11 should not be read as an attribution of

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[59] Gerald T. Sheppard, "Biblical Wisdom Literature and the End of the Modern Age," in *Congress Volume: Oslo 1998*, ed. André Lemaire and Magne Sæbo, VTSup 80 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 389.

[60] Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 236; Sneed, "'Grasping after the Wind,'" 56.

[61] For example, Fox, Meinhold, and Loader read "from his mouth" (Prov 2:6b) as the act of bestowal rather than the act of speaking. See Arndt Meinhold, *Die Sprüche* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1991), 65; Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 114; Loader, *Proverbs 1–9*, 117–18.

[62] Exod 17:1; Lev 24:12; Num 3:16, 39, 51; 4:37, 41, 45, 49; 9:18, 20, 23; 10:13; 13:3; 14:41; 22:18; 24:13; 33:2, 38; 36:5; Deut 1:26, 43; 8:3; 9:23; 34:5; Josh 15:13; 17:4; 19:50; 21:3; 22:9; 1 Sam 12:14, 15; 15:24; 1 Kgs 13:21, 26; 1 Chr 12:24; 2 Chr 36:12; Isa 1:20; 40:5; 58:14; 62:2; Jer 9:11; 23:16; Mic 4:4.

[63] For example, Fox asserts that Agur's oracle is "out of place in a Wisdom book." Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 861. On the contrary, Brevard Childs contends that Agur's oracle is a mark of the canonical shaping of Proverbs to indicate that Proverbs should be taken as "divine words to man." See Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 556.

the "words of the wise" (דברי חכמים) to divine origin is influential.[64] Interestingly, Fox's assertion that "the words of the wise" are never "considered to be 'given' by God" serves as an *a priori* assumption in his arguments.[65]

In contrast to the prevailing views, I will argue that there are good reasons to take Proverbs at its word—that the statement that wisdom comes from the mouth of YHWH is an indication to read the words in Proverbs as a *divine discourse*. Considering wisdom scholars' tendency to take "revelation" as a dictation form of divine communication and the promotion of human agency through the gift of "divine inspiration," the concept of divine discourse is more amenable to "remythologize"[66] the place of divine agency in wisdom's discourse. In his seminal work *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claims That God Speaks*, Wolterstorff adopts the speech-act theory of J. L. Austin and John Searle to delineate how communicative actions of human agents can be regarded as divine communicative actions.[67] The notion of divine discourse provides a helpful way forward in our understanding of how Proverbs functions as divine Scripture over the concepts of revelation and inspiration. Not only is the concept of divine discourse closer to the biblical register of phrases such as "words of YHWH," "mouth of YHWH," and "thus says YHWH," it also captures the communicative aspect of divine speeches—that God speaks to someone to do

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[64] For example, see Choon-Leong Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18C (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 386–88; Thomas Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 211.

[65] Michael V. Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, JSOTSup 71 (Decatur, GA: Almond, 1989), 325.

[66] Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 29.

[67] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 75–94.

something.[68] Divine discourse thus elevates the role of divine agency to the fore of a performative reading of Proverbs.

Also, as we have discussed, the ambiguities of theological terms like "revelation" and "inspiration" appear inadequate to account for the dual agencies of divine discourse. There is, therefore, a need for a biblical model on how to think of human words as divine words. In this regard, the Deuteronomic Torah, which renders Moses's words as divine words, is a prime candidate for considering how a human discourse is taken as a divine discourse.

The contention that wisdom serves as a divine discourse requires the handling of two protracted issues: the divine-human relationship and divine speech in Proverbs. The compatibility of divine speech with human agency is intermingled with the broader issue of the relationship between divine and human agency. If God does not act, then he does not speak.[69] Hence, this dissertation will address the problem of divine and human agency in the first section (chaps. 2–4) and the problem of divine speech in the second (chaps. 5–6). I will employ an exegetical-theological approach to make a case for reading Proverbs as a divine discourse. My thesis is that a divine concursus undergirds the cooperation of human and divine agency such that the wisdom of Proverbs is taken as a divine discourse just as Torah is a divine discourse.

In chapter 2, I will delineate the problem of divine and human agency in modern scholars' view of the book of Proverbs. Here, I will delineate three approaches to the understanding of the divine and human agencies in Proverbs that presume a tension between the human and the divine, which often leads to relegating divine agency to the periphery and retaining only a notional concept of divine action. In my discussion of

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[68] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Word of God," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 850–54.

[69] See Craig Bartholomew's discussion of the problem of divine speech and divine action in history in relation to the Sinai event. Craig G. Bartholomew, *The God Who Acts in History: The Significance of Sinai* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 17–34.

divine and human agency in Proverbs, I will also underscore how the concept of creation order became the theological center of the book of Proverbs, often in a way that substitutes the need for any divine intervention in the thought-world of Israelite sages. From this perspective, creation theology is typically construed as a support for autonomous anthropocentrism. Such an understanding is manifest in the dominance of a certain type of ordered-thinking (*Ordnungsdenken*) that avers the existence of an impersonal order in the sages' thought-world. Creation theology understood in these ways tends to marginalize the agency of God.[70]

Hence, in chapter 3, I will argue that the notion of order in Proverbs is owed to the Creator's active agency rather than to some kind of impersonal principle of order at work automatically. This entails arguing against a modernist conception of event-causation that has influenced scholars' conception of creation order and reinstating the significance of an agent-causation understanding in the reading of Proverbs in which God is the primary agent who brings about rewards and retributions.

In chapter 4, I will argue for the compatibility of divine and human agency in Proverbs. Here, I find a Christian theology of non-contrastive transcendence and divine concursus particularly helpful in navigating the human and divine in the book of Proverbs. The employment of Christian theology in our understanding of divine and human agency in Proverbs is not an exercise of anachronistic futility. The Christian reflection of the dual nature of the incarnate Christ provides a fresh plausibility structure for the study of Proverbs that is otherwise dominated by the dichotomy between the divine and the human. Against the tendency to render divine and human agency as incompatible, I will argue that Proverbs affirms the causal efficacy of human agents and

[70] As Weeks pointed out, the concept of "creation theology" as introduced by wisdom scholars tend to marginalize the traditional conception of divine agency via divine revelation or Torah. See Weeks, *Introduction to Wisdom Literature*, 116–17.

the total causal agency of the Creator God. Chapter 4 concludes the first section of this dissertation.

The second section of this work will address the problem of divine speech in the book of Proverbs. As I will demonstrate in chapter 5, instead of approaching our understanding of Proverbs' divine discourse through the theological conceptions of revelation or inspiration, we can utilize the book of Deuteronomy as a paradigm for understanding the dual agency of divine discourse. Deuteronomy employs a variety of communication strategies, not limited to direct verbal communication between God and humans, such that the "book of the Torah" (Deut 31:24) may count as a divine discourse. Here, I will employ Jean-Pierre Sonnet's work on Deuteronomy's theology of communication to elucidate my arguments.[71] Accordingly, in Deuteronomy, though the Mosaic Torah is a product of Mosaic agency, it is nevertheless identified as a divine voice. Employing N. Wolterstorff's conception of divine discourse as a heuristic tool, I will delineate certain principles underlying Deuteronomy's theology of communication that can treat human discourse as divine discourse. From this perspective, the Deuteronomic divine discourse poses no problems in reconciling human and divine speech. As such, the Deuteronomic Torah exhibits a concursus between divine and human agency, which manifests as the principle of mimesis[72]—the "sameness" and "otherness"— of divine actions.[73]

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[71] I based my observations on Jean-Pierre Sonnet's seminal work. See Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *The Book within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy*, BibInt 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1997). For a similar view, see also Dennis T. Olson, "How Does Deuteronomy Do Theology? Literary Juxtaposition and Paradox in the New Moab Covenant in Deuteronomy 29–32," in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, ed. Brent A. Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 201–14.

[72] An idea I borrowed from Kevin Vanhoozer, "From Canon to Concept: 'Same' and 'Other' in the Relation between Biblical and Systematic Theology," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 12, no. 2 (Autumn 1994): 96–124.

[73] See Barton's discussion on *imitatio Dei* as a basis of theological ethics in the Hebrew Bible. Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics*, 50–54.

In chapter 6, employing Deuteronomy as a paradigm for divine discourse, I will argue that wisdom, too, is a divine discourse in its own right. Here, I will delineate how the identification and mimesis of divine actions serve to underscore wisdom in Proverbs as divine discourse. My analysis will focus on Proverbs 1–9, which serves as a hermeneutical introduction to the rest of the book.[74] Here, I will examine the intertextual connections between Proverbs, Deuteronomy, Psalm 119, and other prophetic texts. My earlier contention for a compatibilist view of divine and human agency in Proverbs will serve to mitigate against interpretations of Proverbs that presume an incompatibility of divine and human agency outside of any textual warrant.

[74] See Michael V. Fox, "Wisdom and the Self-Presentation of Wisdom Literature," in *Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of David J. A. Clines*, ed. David J. A. Clines, J. Cheryl Exum, and H. G. M. Williamson, JSOTSup 373 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 153–72; Christopher B. Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son, and Make My Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs*, BZAW 422 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 43; Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, 48.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEM OF DIVINE AND HUMAN AGENCY IN PROVERBS

The restriction of divine action to the particularism of redemptive history by the "revelation through history" approach has ramifications for understanding Proverbs as divine discourse. From this perspective, G. E. Wright states the "chief difficulty" of integrating wisdom literature into biblical faith is "because it does not fit into the type of faith exhibited in the historical and prophetic literature."[1] Notably, Gerhard von Rad, in his *Old Testament Theology*, classifies wisdom literature as merely "Israel's answer" to YHWH's actions in history.[2] Commenting on the problem posed by the "revelation through history" approach to one's understanding of divine action, Terrence Fretheim specifies how such an approach to divine action has resulted in "the emphasis upon historical event to the diminishment of God's activity in verbal event, natural event, and liturgical event" as well as the "stress placed on dramatic events to the neglect of the more unobtrusive forms of divine activity in everyday experience."[3] Such an understanding of divine action (i.e., of God's doing or speaking) galvanizes the existing Bruch-Oehler view that wisdom is merely derived from human reason and experience.[4] More importantly, a non-interventionist account of divine action continues to maintain a dualistic or competitive view of divine and human agency in wisdom.

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[1] G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital*, Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM, 1952), 103.

[2] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper, 1962), 1:355–56.

[3] Terence E. Fretheim, "The God Who Acts: An Old Testament Perspective," *Theology Today* 54, no. 1 (1997): 7.

[4] See chap. 1.

In this chapter, I will delineate how three approaches have sought to account for divine and human agency in Proverbs. These scholars represent three common approaches to dealing with the divine-human actions in Proverbs that are characterized by a competitive view of divine and human agency. This chapter will introduce the problem of the dichotomizing of the divine and the human in Proverbs, thereby laying the groundwork for my argument for a non-competitive view of divine and human agency in Proverbs in chapter 4.

Divine and Human Agency in Competition

In this section, I will survey the approaches of Walther Zimmerli, John Coert Rylaarsdam, and Gerhard von Rad to the problem of divine and human agency in Proverbs. These approaches, though providing unique and nuanced contributions to dealing with the divine and the human, nevertheless present, in varying degrees, a competitive view of divine and human actions.

Walther Zimmerli—Humanizing Theology

In an influential article that delineates the distinctiveness of OT wisdom,[5] Walther Zimmerli coins his famous adage: "Wisdom thinks resolutely within the framework of a theology of creation."[6] He proposes that wisdom represents a sapiential mastery of the world; this mastery entails the innate human ability to provide order to the world through knowledge. Such mastery, however focused on creaturely abilities and autonomy, is nevertheless theologically grounded on God's creation of and design for

[5] Jamie Grant notes the broad influence of Zimmerli's article in Jamie Grant, "Wisdom and Covenant: Revisiting Zimmerli," *European Journal of Theology* 12, no. 2 (2003): 103–13. Stuart Weeks suggests that Zimmerli was like the "fairy godparent" who helped wisdom literature get into the "ball" of "mid- to late twentieth century" scholarship. Stuart Weeks, "The Place and Limits of Wisdom Revisited," in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Jarick, LHBOTS (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 3.

[6] Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (1964): 148.

humanity. The integration of Genesis' creation account to Israel's faith suggests that Israel must "understand the creation of man by God as an event in which God bestows on man a great gift."[7] The gift bestowed is the right to rule over creation (Gen 1:28); hence, in Zimmerli's words, the gift is to exercise mastery of the world with "striking independence."[8] Accordingly, it follows then that humanity's right to "go out" (a term Zimmerli uses to emphasize human ability and independence) to master the world is authorized by God. In short, it is fair to say that Zimmerli seeks to legitimize an anthropocentric understanding of wisdom (i.e., as human ability) through the creation account.

However, the role of divine influence upon humanity is starkly absent in Zimmerli's reading of the Genesis account. Zimmerli leaves unmentioned that, in G. Ernest Wright's words, though "man is the ruling lord of all things on earth . . . , he is also the servant who is responsible to the Creator."[9] While attempting to give biblical warrant to an anthropocentric view of wisdom, Zimmerli's reading nevertheless entails a certain presupposition of the relationship between God and creation, a presupposition that unwittingly marginalizes divine activity and drives a wedge between divine and human activity. Zimmerli assumes that the divine gift of dominion in Genesis 1:28 is necessarily bereft of divine influence and activity. This reading fails to recognize the significance of the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:27), which indirectly makes God the reference point of human existence.[10] In my judgment, Zimmerli's approach to the relationship between God and

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[7] Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," 151.

[8] Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," 151–52.

[9] G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament and Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 72.

[10] As James Barr argues, "It may thus be possible to say that, though the image of God is attached to the story of the creation of humanity, its primary function and purpose is to say something about God." James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology: The Gifford Lectures for 1991, Delivered in the University of Edinburgh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 170.

creation results in two interweaving trajectories in the study of OT wisdom: a non-interventionist view of divine agency in wisdom and an anthropocentric view of wisdom.

A non-interventionist view of wisdom. First, while Zimmerli acknowledges the significance of divine control over human actions in Proverbs, he nevertheless perceives the existence of a "strange inner tension" between divine intervention and human reason—between the access to God's will through divine direction (Prov 16:1, 9) and the divine authorization of humankind to observe and "to establish the things of the world."[11] When contrasting biblical with Egyptian wisdom, Zimmerli sees a "peculiar affinity to God's command" as a unique characteristic of OT wisdom;[12] nevertheless, the accent of Israel's ethical wisdom falls on human ability. Here, Zimmerli distinguishes between what is obscure and observable to the sages. He suggests that divine influence is associated with areas of the "obscure" that refer to what God finds abominable and takes pleasure in. These are proverbs that speak of the divine moral will and that are "illuminated by the instruction of divine commandments." Zimmerli appeals to the affinity between these Proverbial statements of divine will and "the language of the priestly world" as the evidence of divine origin.[13] But the influence of divine commandments is not the only way the sages gain knowledge of certain areas of the divine will. Besides the obscure areas, it is by the wise man's "orientation to the fixed order" of creation that he establishes the circumstances "where God will reward, where he will punish, where he will hear, where the Omniscient will act."[14] In this way, Zimmerli suggests a dichotomy between human and divine influence of saptiential

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[11] Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," 153.

[12] Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," 152.

[13] Zimmerli states that the obscure includes areas that spoke of the abomination of God, divine pleasure and on what is clean. Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," 153–54.

[14] Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," 154.

knowledge. On the one hand, divine influence is acknowledged when the sages appropriate divine commandments to elucidate the divine will that is hidden from them. On the other hand, retributive circumstances are known through observation and experience in the fixed creation order as part of man's fear of the Lord.[15] While Zimmerli views these two modes of knowledge as complementary in fostering confidence in YHWH,[16] it is apparent that he perceives that there are two non-intersecting modes of sapiential knowledge: a dependence on divine instructions and a purely human way of knowing. It is striking that Zimmerli came to this conclusion even when he begins by grounding the human art of the mastery of the world on a divine command (Gen 1:28)! The lack of consistency suggests that his distinction between the two ways of knowing is crucial to his anthropocentric reading of Proverbs.

An anthropocentric view of wisdom. Zimmerli's 1964 article was based on his earlier work—"Concerning the Structure of Old Testament Wisdom" (1933)—in which he argued for an anthropocentric-eudaemonistic view of wisdom. While Zimmerli softens his emphasis on eudaemonism (probably due to Hartmut Gese's criticisms) in the 1964 article,[17] he nonetheless maintains his non-interventionist anthropocentric view of wisdom. In "Concerning the Structure of Wisdom," Zimmerli opposes the view that perceives humanity as "subordinate" and "dependent" to the Creator based on passages such as Proverbs 15:11; 16:1; 20:12; 21:2; 22:2.[18] Zimmerli contends that man's

[15] In another work, Zimmerli stresses that wisdom, as characterized by counsel, "stimulates reflection and independent decision." Walther Zimmerli, "Concerning the Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, Library of Biblical Studies (New York: Ktav, 1976), 180 (originally published as "Zur Struktur der alttestamentlichen Weisheit," *ZAW* 10, no. 3 [1933]:177–204).

[16] Zimmerli writes, "Because he knows the illumination, which God gives through his commandment, the wise man is able to encourage confidence in Him. He can praise the blessing which results from man's fear of the Lord." Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," 154.

[17] Gese criticizes Zimmerli's grounding of wisdom's lack of authority on anthropocentricity and eudaemonism. We will discuss this more later on. Hartmut Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit; Studien zu den Sprüchen Salomos und zu dem Buche Hiob* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958), 41n1.

[18] Zimmerli, "Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," 177.

subordination to God should be considered as secondary and "plays no role at all at the point of origin . . . of self-understanding" on the most central question about human life that wisdom seeks to explicate.[19] His purpose is to anchor wisdom in the autonomy of humanity.

Zimmerli's arguments are as follows: First, he asserts that OT wisdom's growth out of an ancient aristocratic class suggests that wisdom's interest is primarily utilitarian rather than ontological.[20] Second, this utilitarian purpose is further corroborated by wisdom's lack of authority. Wisdom exerts merely the authority of a counsel rather than the authority of divine imperatives. Here, Zimmerli argues that the form of the sentence literature in Proverbs can simply be read as indicatives rather than imperatives. Thus, the sentence literature has the force of mere human admonitions rather than divine commands. If the Proverbial sentences are merely admonitions lacking in "authoritative character," then it follows that they are formulations of a "common rule of experience" that contain "no authorization."[21] As admonitions, Proverbial aphorisms are alleged as lacking in expectations of obedience. Rather, hearers are "free" to decide based on the principles and relationship elucidated in these proverbs.

Third, even Yahwistic sayings such as Proverbs 3:5–9, 12:2, and 18:22 should be read anthropocentrically and eudemonistically. These passages not only lack references to the Creator's divine authority; they also motivate by depicting God as one who "gratifies human wishes."[22] Theocentric phrases such as "pleasing to God" or "an abomination to YHWH," when seen from a human perspective, merely translate into

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[19] Zimmerli restates his point of contention like this: "Does the 'central question' of wisdom grow up out of knowledge and recognition of a fixed, binding obligation—above the question arose concerning the broadest tie of creature to Creator—whose realization in practical conduct is now in question? Or, is the contention right that it is a question which originates with the individual person, ultimately being oriented around him alone?" Zimmerli, "Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," 178.

[20] Zimmerli, "Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," 178.

[21] Zimmerli, "Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," 183, 184.

[22] Zimmerli, "Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," 185.

what is valuable or abominable to man. Zimmerli concludes that proverbs are not theocentric but anthropocentric. Even the Yahwistic sayings do not employ the Creator's authority as a justification or the basis of their motivations. Rather, these sayings "appeal to man's interest in a veiled form as the ultimately decisive factor."[23]

Zimmerli states his epistemological supposition that facilitates this shift from theocentricity to anthropocentricity:

> Wisdom does not intend the totally Incalculable by its concepts of God, which appears wherever the notion of God is earnestly viewed as that of the Lord and Creator, but rather the calculable side with respect to which man can "conduct" himself, where he can bring forward his question and get a response. God is seen from man's viewpoint, and his conduct (*drk yhwh* 10:29) is evaluated against the worth that it can have for man—to state it rather crassly.[24]

At this junction, although he does not openly acknowledge this point, Zimmerli appears to be influenced by Kantian idealism.[25]

Accordingly, if wisdom is perceived as a purely human enterprise operating from human empirical experiences, then wisdom's God-talk is limited to addressing the "calculable" realm of ethics without the predication of any concept of God.[26] This

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[23] Zimmerli, "Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," 188.

[24] Zimmerli, "Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," 187.

[25] According to a traditional understanding of Kantian epistemology, reality consists of two fundamentally different realms: the phenomena and the noumena worlds. The phenomena consist of things or beings that human minds are aware of and that are accessible to human sense-experience, while the noumena are objects that are inaccessible to human senses but are conceived by understanding or intuitions. Accordingly, human knowledge is confined to the phenomenological world. In Kant's thinking, humans can contemplate about God, but human predication of divine attributes is nothing more than speculation since their knowledge of things cannot transcend their experiences. Furthermore, if, as Kant argues, phenomenal objects are representations of the structures and categories of the human mind based on human experience, then it is not even possible for humans to speak about the Incalculable God who belongs to the noumenal realm. Hence, Kant dismisses any theoretical depiction of God or any theoretical exploration of God as speculative. Since practical reason is concerned with moral law, Kant allows the postulation of God as a transcendental framework for a moral law. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Woods, Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 347, 312. See also James Luchte, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: A Reader's Guide*, Continuum Reader's Guides (London: Continuum, 2007), 142. For a discussion of alternative views of Kant's thinking, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11–20.

[26] See Philip Johannes Nel's critique of Zimmerli's approach. Philip Johannes Nel, *The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs*, BZAW (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), 107–8. My assessment of Zimmerli differs from R. N. Whybray's. His observation that "there was no conflict in Proverbs between the claims of god and of man" in Zimmerli's thought is generally true but does not take

presupposition appears to undergird Zimmerli's insistence that the anthropological focus of wisdom must be bereft of any notion of divine intervention and that every statement about God must be taken anthropocentrically. Given Zimmerli's appeal to the creation account, what aspect of creation theology derived from either the Genesis account or Proverbs itself necessitates such a divide between human and divine agency? Further, what evidence does Proverbs provide to suggest that the God-talk is merely functional and not propositional?

Upon closer investigation, Zimmerli's arguments for an anthropocentric-eudaemonistic reading of Proverbs are undermined by several arguments. First, the claim that wisdom is founded on an order/norm external to the human mind tends to undermine Zimmerli's anthropocentric-eudaemonistic subjectivism. Notably, Gese has argued that Zimmerli's grounding of the lack of authority in wisdom on an anthropocentric-eudaemonistic reading does not take into the account that God and the concept of world order are inseparable in the ancient view of wisdom. Contrary to Zimmerli, the reason for the seemingly lack of authority in wisdom should be attributed to the intransigency of the creation order and the limits of human ability.[27] We will examine more of Gese's view below. It suffices to note that Gese's dual emphasis on creation order and the limits of humankind has been influential in correcting an anthropocentric reading of Proverbs that is bereft of divine intervention, albeit it does not mean that divine activity will be considered as central to wisdom's understanding of the world.[28]

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into account the points I have raised here. R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 118.

[27] Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 41n1, 45.

[28] From a similar perspective, Gerhard von Rad contends that "behind this concept of life there lies not the dispassionate utilitarian standpoint of the man who has taken his life into his own hands, but the action, which has to be constantly repeated, of pious integration into a divine order which is imposed on man and in which alone he can find blessing." Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 80. Arguing for an objective norm behind these Proverbial sayings, Raymond C. van Leeuwen notes that "much confusion has resulted from the failure to realize that the Sayings which contrast good and evil . . . are not merely existential statements but normative statements

Second, Philip Nel has examined Zimmerli's argument that the sentence literature of Proverbs should be read as admonitions without the character of the authority. According to Nel, Zimmerli's form-critical analysis is too restrictive. The motivations for each admonition should not be confined to individual sentences. Instead, Nel examines various forms of admonitory sentences and their context. He discovers that wisdom's admonitions are driven by various motivations found also in Deuteronomy (e.g., Prov 3:1–2 with Deut 6:2 and 8:1; Prov 22:28 with Deut 19:14). Of particular significance is the promissory motivations in these proverbs. Contrary to Zimmerli's portrayal of wisdom as debatable human counsel, the "promissory character of the motivation intensifies the call to obedience of wisdom's counsel" and explains that "wisdom is the wisdom of Jahweh and it is He who lengthens the prosperous and meaningful existence of those who intentionally devote their lives in harmony with this wisdom."[29]

Third, Zimmerli's emphasis on Proverbs' utilitarianism fails to account for the language of desire in Proverbs. As Michael Fox argues, Proverbs insists "that we do more than simply obey the teachings or learn wisdom for utilitarian advantage alone. They insist on an emotional commitment, a desire for learning . . . . Without love, knowledge is inert. Hence we are required to love wisdom."[30] In addition, Timothy Sandoval has argued persuasively that eudemonistic success is not in the purview of Proverbs' pedagogical goal (cf. Prov 1:1–7). The language of wealth and poverty is Proverbs' rhetorical device for moral formation (what I would call sapiential formation).[31]

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which contrasts two things with respect to some norm." Raymond C. van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25–27*, SBLDS (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 45n15.

[29] Nel, *Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs*, 87–88, 91.

[30] Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 275. Cf. Anne W. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 63.

[31] Timothy J. Sandoval, *The Discourse of Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, BibInt 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 66–70.

Furthermore, Zimmerli's construal of the sentence literature as individualistic overlooks sentences such as Proverbs 11:10–11, 25:13, and 29:8 that speak of the social benefits of wisdom.[32]

Fourth, the assertion that Proverbs is concerned with material success fails to take into account the "better-than" proverbs—which appropriately underscore Proverbs' core values.[33] These proverbs value wisdom (Prov 3:14; 8:11, 19; 16:16), the fear of the LORD (15:16), love (15:17), humility (16:19), peace (17:1; 21:9), righteousness, integrity and truthfulness (Prov 16:8; 19:1, 22) more than material abundance. Furthermore, Sandoval underscores the tension between wisdom's relative value over wealth on the one hand (Prov 3:14–15) and wisdom's possession of wealth on the other (Prov 3:16). He contends that such a tension is an indication that Proverbs is employing wealth as a motivational symbol to point to entities beyond wealth itself.[34] Hence, there is no good reason to suppose that material success is the goal of Proverbial instructions.

Lastly, Zimmerli's use of eudemonism to argue for autonomous wisdom begs the question of whether self-interest is necessary antithetical to theocentricism. Zoltán Schwáb has addressed the alleged dichotomy and observes that self-interest is not only characteristic of Proverbs but also, to a lesser degree, characteristic of Deuteronomy. Following Arndt Meinhold's argument that Proverbs 2 serves as the thematic overview of

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[32] Cf. Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*, ConBOT (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 120.

[33] T. Anthony Perry, *Wisdom Literature and the Structure of Proverbs* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 40–44. For a detailed examination of how the "better-than" proverbs run counter to the assertion that to Proverbs is concerned with material success, see Zoltán S. Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of the Book of Proverbs: Selfishness and Secularity Reconsidered*, JTISup (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 117–26.

[34] Sandoval, *Wealth and Poverty in Proverbs*, 66–70, 71–83.

Proverbs 3–7,[35] Schwáb contends that Proverbs has a theocentric focus that is compatible with self-interest (i.e., eudaemonism).[36]

While Zimmerli rightly captures the essence of God's design for genuine human agency, his marginalization of divine agency might reflect more of the influence of modernist epistemology than biblical reasoning. More importantly, Zimmerli's construal of the relationship between God and creation is not the only available option. As we will see in chapter 4, it is more plausible and coherent to perceive this relationship in ways that do not undercut either divine or creaturely agency.

In summary, Zimmerli demonstrates how a particular view of the relationship between God and creation affects one's understanding of divine and human agency in Proverbial wisdom. The limiting of divine agency to a specific sphere and the elevation of human autonomy is crucial to Zimmerli's understanding. It can be said that Zimmerli seeks to ground the legitimation of human autonomy in a theology of divine authorization. Nevertheless, Zimmerli perceives that human activity and divine influence are incompatible. The God-talk in Proverbs does not actually refer to divine attributes. These attributes, in turn, are inconsequential to our understanding of Proverbs' worldview. For humans to be truly autonomous, divine influence must be limited to a specific sphere—outside of the sphere of human activity.[37] Also, as a forerunner to an interpretive trend, Zimmerli relegates divine freedom to the periphery of wisdom by suggesting that creation order is also at odds with the notion of divine freedom. His conclusions, nevertheless, are the logical outworking of his understanding of the relation between God and creation.

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[35] Arndt Meinhold, *Die Sprüche* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1991), 63–64.

[36] Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 128–59.

[37] According to Christopher Insole's succinct summation of Kant's philosophy, Kant perceives that "where we act, God does not act . . . . Otherwise, it would not be our action." Christopher J. Insole, *The Intolerable God: Kant's Theological Journey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 126.

**John Coert Rylaarsdam—
The Theologization of
Anthropocentric
Wisdom**

Along the same trajectory as Zimmerli, John Coert Rylaarsdam grounds autonomous human wisdom in God's creation and seeks to derive a view of wisdom as divine revelation distinct from prophetic revelation. In his *Revelation in Wisdom*, Rylaarsdam situates the discussion of Israelite wisdom along several antimonies: nature and grace, human and divine initiatives, divine gift on the order of creation and gift in the order of special grace, and optimistic and pessimistic wisdom.

Following the scholarly consensus of his time,[38] Rylaarsdam supposes that early wisdom is distinguished from late wisdom by a sole reliance on "natural human equipment" and the absence of any hint of "divine initiative" in the acquisition of wisdom.[39] According to Rylaarsdam, the oldest part of the book of Proverbs (Prov 10–31) is the key representation of this early wisdom. Originating in the context of international wisdom, early wisdom is decidedly optimistic about the human ability to discern wisdom from an orderly creation, whereas late wisdom is decidedly pessimistic about human ability.[40] Early wisdom perceives that humans can discover wisdom and that the emphasis on human endeavor takes place within the understanding of God's creation. God is the maker of both the laws of creation order and the human faculties that can discover them.[41] Early wisdom presumes that humanity, as part of God's order of creation, has the potential ability to acquire wisdom.[42] Early wisdom is "humanistic" in

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[38] For a brief survey of the scholarly views on early Israelite wisdom, see Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 1–4.

[39] John Coert Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 67.

[40] For other scholars who distinguish between pessimistic and optimistic wisdom, see Berend Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos*, Handbuch zum Alten Testament 1.16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1963), 51; Udo Skladny, *Die Ältesten Spruchsammlungen in Israel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 82.

[41] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 71.

[42] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 72.

the sense that wisdom is acquired by unaided human faculties. Nevertheless, early optimistic wisdom is fundamentally religious because the sages operated with a clear awareness of creaturely dependence on God and of human frailty and limitations.[43] There is, however, no special (esoteric?) gifting of wisdom but a general gifting of life to all humanity by God. Early wisdom is entirely based on human initiatives. The divine gift of wisdom is in the order of creation and not in the order of special grace. There is synergism of nature and grace in early wisdom. However, grace must be understood as the gracious act of divine creation and the endowment of human autonomous reasoning rather than a special grace of divine revelation.

Nevertheless, according to Rylaarsdam, there are signs of divine initiative and divine grace in the latest section of Proverbs demonstrated by wisdom's invitation and pursuit of man (1:20–23, 32; 8:1, 32).[44] However, Rylaarsdam maintains that the accent is still on man's use of natural faculties for the acquisition of wisdom. The call and invitation of personified wisdom merely serves as a metaphor for a self-revealing aspect of creation order that man sought to understand. Accordingly, divine initiative here does not undercut man's use of natural means of knowledge. Rather, it aims to inculcate human receptibility—a point that Gerhard von Rad develops further in his writing—and urges man to search for wisdom with all of the capacity given him.

Unlike early wisdom, late wisdom accentuates the necessity of divine grace and initiative due to a programmatic nationalization of wisdom. According to Rylaarsdam, humanistic wisdom inevitably falls into skepticism and despair as exemplified by Job and Eccelessiates, which "represents the last efforts of self-reliance."[45] Unlike early wisdom, late wisdom is pessimistic about the human capacity to

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[43] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 74.

[44] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 67.

[45] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 76.

grasp the "irrational and unverifiable concepts of faith and grace" in a transcendent God. This inevitably leads to despair in man's search for wisdom and the emergence of true wisdom as divine secrets.[46] In late wisdom, divine wisdom is totally unattainable by human means. Divine wisdom must be God's special gift to man. It is a special grace.

Accordingly, the strong emphasis on divine initiative in late wisdom serves a critical purpose in the development of Jewish religion. It destroys the "synergistic harmony" between nature and grace (in terms of divine creation and the endowment of human faculties) in early wisdom until grace plays a dominant role. Even then, nature is not discarded but finds its proper place subsumed under the emphasis of the divine gift of grace to Israel.[47] For Rylaarsdam, the reordered relationship of divine initiative and nature is clearest only in the apocryphal Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch, and 4 Maccabees. The reordering of grace and nature in later wisdom brings about a "new confidence" and "optimistic faith" by surrendering the "doctrine of empirical verification" of early wisdom writers to embrace divine wisdom through the law.[48] The exaltation of transcendent faith leads to a new synergistic pattern whereby faith in divine transcendence takes priority over empiricism. Then, divine wisdom continues to work through human faculties, but divine grace is perceived as preeminent.

Rylaarsdam's contribution is his contention that revelation in wisdom is comprised of a synergism between divine initiative and human faculties, unlike the ecstatic experience of prophetic revelation that "blocks out natural faculties."[49] Contrary to Zimmerli, Rylaarsdam more readily affirms a complementary relationship between divine grace and human faculties. Though Proverbial wisdom is based on empiricism, it

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[46] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 82.

[47] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 90.

[48] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 93.

[49] Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature*, 109.

is nevertheless steeped in the understanding that human sense and perception are divine gifts. Furthermore, Rylaarsdam's proposal of a theological correction of early wisdom by late wisdom appears to have a positive influence on William McKane

's proposal of Yahwistic reinterpretation as well as on others who view the theological elements in Proverbs as serving a corrective function to other parts of Proverbs.[50]

However, I find the following points objectionable. First, Rylaarsdam maintains that Proverbial wisdom is primarily focused on human faculties whereby the divine initiative takes on a secondary role only in the latest section of Proverbs. I find his construal of Proverbs as optimistic toward human empirical abilities problematic. It is important to note that Proverbs perceives human faculties as not only limited but also potentially totally flawed. Thus, Proverbs warns against an uncritical reliance on one's perception without divine evaluation (Prov 16:2; 21:2; 30:12–13). Proverbs derides one who is "wise in his own eyes" (Prov 12:15; 26:12, 16; 28:11). Likewise, Proverbs is not optimistic about one's hearing ability. There is a lingering threat that one's auditory ability might be misdirected to the allurement of sinners (1:10–14) and the smooth words of the adulteress (Prov 2:16; 6:24; 7:5, 21). Furthermore, Rylaarsdam appears to gloss over passages that highlight human limitations and divine intervention even in the so-called "oldest" section of Proverbs. Also, the emphasis on human limitations and divine providence in Proverbs 3:5–6, 16:1, and 16:9 does not tamper with Rylaarsdam's optimistic construal of early wisdom.

Second, for his developmental scheme to work, Rylaarsdam portrays human reasoning in Proverbs as autonomous reasoning. Besides a cursory mention that humans are dependent on their Creator, Rylaarsdam seemingly emphasizes the autonomy of

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[50] William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 10–22. R. B. Y. Scott, "Wise and Foolish, Righteous and Wicked," in *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel*, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., VTSup 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 146–65.

human faculties. However, it is not self-evident that every Proverbial saying can be classified as derived from autonomous empirical reasoning. It is unlikely that passages that speaks of things abominable to YHWH (e.g., Prov 6:16–19; 11:1) and divine intervention or retribution (e.g., 16:7; 20:22) are derived from autonomous reasoning. Furthermore, while there are several places in Proverbs where the writers draw from personal observations (e.g., 7:6–27), other references to observations might be merely for illustrative purposes (e.g., 6:6–11; 24:30–34).[51]

Third, while Rylaarsdam construes Proverbs as optimistic about human abilities, his final evaluation of Proverbial wisdom in light of transcendent wisdom is dismal. If divine wisdom serves as a corrective to the autonomous empiricism of Proverbs, then Proverbs has little to contribute to theological wisdom apart from laying the groundwork for its later criticism.

To describe Proverbs as having an optimistic view of human ability fails to account for the limits of human beings portrayed in various texts. Indeed, Proverbs does assume that humans have the ability to perceive wisdom within their limits. In this regard, Proverbs perceives human beings as causal and efficacious knowing agents. But Rylaarsdaam appears to think that human causal agency is incompatible with divine agency. The latter must somehow override human agency to render wisdom theological.

Gerhard von Rad—The Dialectic of Human Wisdom and Divine Intervention

Gerhard von Rad is a key figure in the proposal of a dialectical approach between divine and human agency in Proverbs. Von Rad views the rise of wisdom thinking during Solomon's era as analogous to the age of Enlightenment—which, in

[51] See Michael Fox's explanations. Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18B (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 963–67.

Immanuel Kant's definition means the coming-of-age of man[52]—whereby Israel emerges from a "very old-fashioned" "pan-sacral faith."[53] However, von Rad objects to the radical dichotomy between faith and reason. He criticizes the tendency in wisdom scholarship to over-secularize Israel's wisdom (e.g., McKane's casting of Israel's sages as empiricists who do not allow religious presupposition to affect their view of reality).[54] Israel's wisdom was not simply the "manifestation of a rationality which was independent of faith."[55] Rather, Israel's sages experienced the world's reality as conterminous with the will of God. There is no arena of the sages' experience outside of YHWH's control. In this way, von Rad depicts the sages' worldview as both "secular" and conterminous with Yahwistic faith.

Reasoning from the compatibility of a secular and religious worldview, von Rad contends that Proverbs attests a dialectical tension between human and divine agency. On the one hand, "man sees himself faced with orders which can be recognized."[56] On the other hand, man is faced with God's freedom that gives room for *ad hoc* divine actions.[57] These two poles depict the tension between what can be grasped by humans and the limits of human wisdom. These two poles are most explicitly fleshed out in passages that juxtapose human and divine agency.

Prov 16:9	לב אדם יחשׁב דרכו ויהוה יכין צעדו׃	The heart of man plans his way but YWHH establishes his steps.

[52] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 98.

[53] Von Rad does not clearly spell out what he means by "pan-sacralism" except that it is a belief that "every event was encompassed by rites and sacral ordinances." However, he seems to imply that wisdom stands in contrast to a pan-sacral belief where humans play no part in political matters. Hence, one can infer that by pan-sacralism, von Rad is referring to a belief that the divine determines everything without human participation. Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 58–59.

[54] For von Rad's critique of McKane's views, see von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 68n12.

[55] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 61–62.

[56] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 312.

[57] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 107, 312.

Prov 19:14	בית והון נחלת אבות ומיהוה אשה משׂכלת:	House and wealth are inheritance of fathers but a prudent wife is from YHWH.
Prov 19:21	רבות מחשׁבות בל־באישׁ ועצת יהוה היא תקום:	Many plans are in the heart of man but the purpose of YHWH shall stand.

In his treatment of the limits of wisdom, von Rad does not discuss whether he views reason as autonomous or aided by divine help. Instead, he contends that the above passages should neither negate human agency nor suggest a division of tasks between God and humans.[58] Rather, these passages merely suggest the fact that despite human planning, there is still an element of mystery subjected to divine intervention.[59] They indicate the lack of any "direct, predictable road leading from a human plan to its execution."[60] Pertaining to matters that are incalculable by the human mind, one must acknowledge the role of divine intervention. Hence, Proverbs 21:30 ("there is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against YHWH") is not a warning against the acquisition of wisdom by human faculties or the need for human actions. Rather, this passage aims to correct any misconception that the practice of human wisdom is a "guarantee of success."[61] Von Rad contends that the openness to divine intervention at the boundary of human wisdom is integral to (human) wisdom's teaching. There is no issue with the human acquisition of wisdom because Israel's sages promulgated both competence in the acquisition of wisdom and warning against a false sense of security and self-glorification. As part of their pedagogical strategy to instill wisdom that can only be acquired by the humble, Israel's sages vacillated in a dialectical fashion between the "causality of events" (as seen in the world order) and "Yahweh's direct dealings with

[58] Von Rad operates with the scholarly consensus that wisdom is a human enterprise. Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 8.

[59] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 100.

[60] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 101.

[61] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 101.

men" without any resolution.[62] In doing so, they aimed to create a "constant oscillation between grasp of meaning and loss of meaning" designed to induce their students to "make [their] own contribution in this exciting arena of knowledge of life."[63] It is clear that while von Rad sees divine and human activity as inseparable, he, nevertheless, construes divine and human agency as polar opposites.[64] One must be open to divine intervention at the boundaries of human reason, but it cannot be said that divine activity is operative in human reason.

Early and late wisdom. Von Rad's binary construal of divine and human agency is most vivid in his characterization of the so-called early and late wisdom in Proverbs. Divine assistance is characteristic of late wisdom (e.g., Job 32:6–11, 18–20; Prov 1–9), which emphasizes wisdom as the "special gift of Yahweh."[65] The attribution of wisdom as a divine gift represents a theological emphasis of the "advanced period" of Israel's sapiential development. In late wisdom, one can find examples of the appeal to prophetic inspiratory events (e.g., Job 4:12–17; 32:6–11). Nevertheless, human activity is not eclipsed by divine assistance. Such appeals to divine inspirations are merely the means of legitimization of the wise men's perceptions as "deriving from a prior act of divine inspiration."[66] Also, "even with this divine assistance, the teachers were not relieved of the duty of being accurate in their reasoning and of explicitly refuting

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[62] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 105.

[63] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 106.

[64] Von Rad views the wisdom teachers as employing two types of "diametrically opposed" empirical statements—one that emphasize rules and human activity and one that emphasizes divine intervention in human life. Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 105.

[65] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 54–55.

[66] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 56.

erroneous opinions."[67] In short, late wisdom is characterized by divinely assisted human reasoning, but divine assistance is relegated to a "prior act."

Early wisdom (such as the sentence literature of Prov 10–29), on the other hand, is characterized by the absence of any hint of theological motivations, such as the appeal to divine inspiration.[68] Proverbs 10:13, 13:20, and 14:6 clearly attribute the source of wisdom to human understanding; the presumption is that wisdom can be acquired by human activity (16:16). Accessibility to wisdom by human activity is von Rad's warrant for attributing to wisdom a universal and open character.[69] In contrast to the "exclusiveness of [Israel]'s religious convictions," early wisdom does not limit the scope of its matters to theological reflection but also incorporates useful sayings of neighboring nations.[70] Here, von Rad echoes other scholars who relate the universal character of Proverbial wisdom with other ancient Near Eastern (ANE) sources.

As mentioned above, von Rad rejects the over-secularization of early wisdom and asserts that faith is integral with reason. Diverging from Rylaarsdam's concern of nature and grace in wisdom, von Rad does not speak of whether autonomous or divinely assisted reason was in view. On this matter, von Rad prefers to speak of "understanding reason . . . , a feeling for the truth which emanates from the world and addresses man," in contrast to the "authoritative reason which reigned supreme over dead natural matter."[71]

Von Rad is concerned with a rationality that is *not* independent of faith.[72] But what does he mean by a rationality that is based on faith? Accordingly, the basis of this

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[67] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 57.

[68] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 57.

[69] Von Rad is suggestive that the universal and open access of wisdom stands in contrast to the "something private and personal or even esoteric" without explicitly saying that wisdom stands in contrast to the prophetic. Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 158.

[70] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 58.

[71] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 296–97.

[72] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 62.

consonance of faith and rationality rests on the perception of regularity and order in both the politico-socio-ethical experiences of humanity in the world (i.e., the fixed form of the act-consequence nexus) and the "experiences which man had of God."[73] The ease with which early wisdom alternates between Yahwistic sayings and non-Yahwistic sayings demonstrates that "the experiences of the world were for her always divine experiences as well, and the experiences of God were for her experiences of the world."[74] Hence, faith is integral to reason in the sense that one's knowledge of Yahweh (i.e., faith) serves as the presuppositional framework for the sages' search for knowledge in the world.

Assessment of Gerhard von Rad's views. It seems clear that despite his emphasis on the role of divine assistance in late wisdom and the role of Yahwistic faith in early wisdom, von Rad appears to relegate these areas to the margins of presuppositions (or prior acts). His conclusion is consistent with his *Religionsgeschichte* approach. Proverbs' God-talk is a matter of religious experiences, and whether these point to any propositional truth is sidestepped. Divine assistance has notional rather than operational significance. Accordingly, faith enables insights, but insights can also inform faith.[75] In other words, faith operates like a worldview through which the sages can utilize their cognitive faculties in understanding the created order. The God of Proverbs, however, does not actively affect human cognitive activities. Such a depiction of the function of the God-talk in Proverbs seems to run counter to the assertions of the God-sayings that claim YHWH's active involvement in human activities.

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[73] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 61.

[74] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 62.

[75] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 195.

Furthermore, by privileging experience (or empiricism) over other forms of knowing, von Rad unwittingly undercuts his investigation into the nature of wisdom.[76] It is unclear how assertions like "The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry but he thwarts the craving of the wicked" (Prov 10:3) and "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good" (15:3) are derived from subjective sensory experience. More importantly, religious experience need not be a purely subjective phenomenon, as von Rad construes it. If the God of Israel does exist, then Israel's religious experience of God is a matter of God's *presenting* himself to their experience.[77] As such, even from the vantage point of religious experience, Proverbs' God-talk consists of justified propositional statements of YHWH's nature and active involvement in human affairs.

The subtle marginalization of Yahwistic faith and divine intervention paves the way for von Rad's elevation of world order to the foremost of wisdom thought. The accent of Yahwistic faith is not so much on the God of the created order but on the created order as supported by God. Von Rad's assertion of faith in the created order allows creation to eclipse the place of the Creator.[78] This emphasis on the created order is consistent with the view that empirical experience is the epistemological basis for the sages' writings. Such an assertion, however, runs counter to numerous Proverbial sentences where faith and trust are directed at YHWH rather than the created order.[79] We

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[76] See Adolf Schlätter's critique of the history-of-religion approach. Adolf Schlätter, "Atheistic Methods in Theology," *Asbury Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (1996): 48.

[77] For a philosophical justification of religious experiences as God's presenting himself before those who experience him, see William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[78] This reversal of emphasis prompted Stuart Weeks's corrective: "It is problematic to speak of a 'creation theology' in wisdom literature, it is much less difficult to speak of a 'creator theology,' which may not be unique to that literature, but which is intrinsic to its character." Stuart Weeks, *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 119.

[79] Cf. Prov 16:3, 20; 18:10; 22:19; 23:17; 28:25; 29:25. See also Franz-Josef Steiert's critique of von Rad in Franz-Josef Steiert, *Die Weisheit Israels—ein Fremdkörper im Alten Testament? Eine*

will examine the tendency to subsume divine agency under the notion of the created order in the next chapter.

For now, it is important to point out the dualism (rather than the paradoxical)[80] inherent in von Rad's view of divine and human agency. Key to his dialectical understanding of faith and reason is the distinction between trusting in YHWH as the God who acts and trusting in the God who set creation in order. Von Rad contends that the absence of a secular and religious divide in OT wisdom is seen in the sages' unified experience of the world and God. He states that one should avoid conflating the "experience of YHWH" and the "experience of the world" since the Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic Proverbial sentences (in Prov 16:7–12) indicate that these experiences "did not entirely coincide."[81]

Thus, it seems clear that for von Rad there are two means of knowledge in Proverbs: (1) that which is gained from direct divine intervention (late wisdom) and (2) that which is gained from the sages' appropriation of the created order through a presupposed theological lens of YHWH's sovereignty over all human experience in creation. Von Rad, however, sets up the two ways of knowledge in a dialectical fashion—"each of which," as A. Josef Greig puts it, "contains an element of truth, but which mutually excludes the other."[82] In this way, von Rad perceives of a tension between divine and human agency, between God's and human action.[83] Similar to

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Untersuchung Zum Buch der Sprüche auf dem Hintergrund der Ägyptischen Weisheitslehren, Freiburger theologische Studien 143 (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1990), 33–34.

[80] Paul Tillich, "What Is Wrong with the 'Dialectic' Theology?," *Journal of Religion* 15, no. 2 (1935): 127.

[81] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 63.

[82] Cf. A. Josef Greig, "Some Formative Aspects in the Development of Gerhard von Rad's Idea of History," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 16 (1978): 323.

[83] Here, I disagree with Boström's classification of von Rad as an example of those who see no tension between divine and human agency. Boström, *God of the Sages*, 37n240. I have argued here that while von Rad perceives there is no tension between faith and reason, he does postulate two different means of knowledge based on divine and human agency.

Rylaarsdam, von Rad finds support for a dualism between divine and human agency from a distinction between early secular and late theological wisdom; albeit, in agreement with Gese, he sees Yahwistic piety as an integral element of early secular wisdom. William McKane and R. N. Whybray have argued on similar grounds for a Yahwistic reinterpretation of early secular wisdom.[84] Contrary to Rylaarsdam and McKane, who perceive late theological wisdom as conflicting with early human wisdom, von Rad argues for a dialectic of theological and anthropological wisdom, thus maintaining the integrity and validity of the two means of acquiring wisdom.

Others have followed von Rad's dialectical approach as a way to reconcile the divine-human tension in Proverbs while rejecting the linear development of early to late wisdom.[85] Stuart Weeks, however, contends against von Rad's key assumption in his dialectical approach. Weeks states that no evidence can be adduced to support the claim that "secular" and "religious" sayings belong to "different groups at different times."[86] He notes two unproven assumptions employed in an evolutionary understanding of wisdom's development: (1) that there is a linear development of wisdom from secularism to Yahwism and (2) that the presence of the divine name renders a Proverbial sentence distinct from others.[87] I would add that even a dialectical approach to the theological and anthropological elements in Proverbs adopts an unproven supposition that an aphorism projects an insular experience of reality (i.e., *either* the "experience of YHWH" *or* the "experience of the world"). Recent paremiological studies suggest the contrary. It is more plausible that a proverbial aphorism connotes only a single aspect of the worldview of the

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[84] McKane, *Proverbs*, 1022; R. N. Whybray, "Yahweh-Sayings and Their Contexts in Prov 10,1–22,16," in *Wisdom: The Collected Articles of Norman Whybray*, ed. Katharine J. Dell and Margaret Barker, Society for Old Testament Study Monograph Series (New York: Routledge, 2016), 45–57.

[85] Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994); Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 129.

[86] Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 62.

[87] Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 62–63.

sages.[88] As such, there are better ways to reconcile the theological and anthropological elements in Proverbs. Contrary to a modernist dismissal of the legitimacy of the sages' God-talk, the reconciliation of the theological and anthropological lies in the theology of the book of Proverbs itself.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have surveyed three broad approaches of handling divine and human agency in Proverbs. Zimmerli seeks to humanize the theological elements of Proverbs and grounds the legitimacy of autonomous human wisdom in a creation theology. Rylaarsdam perceives Proverbs as the root of an optimistic human wisdom grounded in the divine grace of creation. He sees the increasing theologizing of wisdom as a necessity to correct autonomous human reasoning and to exalt divine grace over nature. According to his scheme, Proverbs—a book that epitomizes autonomous human reasoning—merely serves as a bridge to the divine wisdom of later apocryphal wisdom books. In this scheme of things, theologization is perceived as a corrective against humanistic wisdom. In contrast, von Rad maintains that both human and divine agency in Proverbs stand in an irresolvable dialectical tension. Each agency maintains its distinctive function without being absorbed into the other. Together, they serve the sages' pedagogical intent of inculcating humility toward the pursuit of wisdom.

Each of these approaches, nevertheless, share several common assumptions. First, human agency serves as the starting point for thinking about the nature of wisdom. Divine agency is brought in to sustain the validity of human agency (Zimmerli, Rylaarsdam)—either as a corrective of human wisdom (Rylaarsdam) or as a dialectical balance between faith and reason (von Rad). Second, the distinction between human and divine agency rests on a theory of the development of Israelite wisdom from "secular" to

[88] Perry, *Wisdom Literature and the Structure of Proverbs*, 103.

"religious." Characteristic of these approaches is that Proverbs is read from the anthropological to the theological rather than from the theological to the anthropological. Third, human and divine agency are thought to be distinct and should not be conflated. Divine initiative and human initiative represent two distinct elements in the book of Proverbs. Accordingly, human reason in Proverbs is perceived as autonomous in the sense that it is without divine influence. Fourth, the God-talk in Proverbs is perceived in terms of a phenomenology of human subjective experience. As such, theology is divorced from ethics and construed as merely serving pragmatic and utilitarian purposes void of propositional content.

It is clear, therefore, that divine agency taken as the Creator's agency in human creatures is viewed as limited or marginalized relative to autonomous human agency. The evolutionary view of the Israelites' wisdom—that grew from simple secular sayings to complex theological discourse—fom which such a view of divine agency drew finds few supporters today.[89] Today, scholars are more open to read the theological elements as integral to the anthropological elements in Proverbs. Moreover, a good case can be made for reading Proverbs in its present structure—where Proverbs 1–9 serves as the hermeneutical framework for the rest of the book without being preoccupied with which collection predates the other.[90] A synchronic reading of the final form of Proverbs is preferable because there is little reason not to read the book as it is. As Raymond van Leeuwen has rightly argued, every diachronic separation of texts operates on the assumption of unity from which one then attempts to discern whether a text fits its

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[89] Patrick Skehan has chastised that "the 'secular' basis for the supposition is altogether gratuitous in afflicting some unidentifiable group of ancient sages with the misfortunes of the modern agnostic." Patrick W. Skehan, "A Single Editor for the Whole Book of Proverbs," *CBQ* 10, no. 2 (April 1948): 128.

[90] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 553; Scott L. Harris, *Proverbs 1–9: A Study of Inner-Biblical Interpretation*, SBLDS (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 64–65; Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 11.

existing placement.[91] There is good reason to reject an evolutionary development of Proverbs from pithy sayings to complex discourse as well as attempts to read the sayings from reconstructed contexts with alleged theological differences.[92] A more viable approach is to take the current composition and arrangement of Proverbs at face value. Moreover, as others have argued, it is methodologically sound to read the book of Proverbs as a "collection of collections" of sayings.[93] The theology of Proverbs is seen not only as integral to the "secular" sayings in terms of the phenomenology of religion—as in how faith (religious experience) is integral to reason—but also as an essential part of understanding how Proverbs should be read as a collection of collections.

However, as seen in Rylaarsdam's and von Rad's approach, divine agency either over-corrects the anthropological elements of Proverbs or does not go far enough such that the theological and anthropological remain in dialectical tension. But there is another way. I will argue that the divine Creator's agency is compatible with human agency. This requires a rejection of the modernist notion that the God-talk in Proverbs does not correspond to any propositional content. Even without an explicit account of the revelatory source of the Yahwistic sayings, we can assume that the writer of Proverbs is entitled to claim what they say of YHWH as propositionally true—as warranted knowledge of God.[94] Hence, the theology of Proverbs undergirds its ethics and opens up

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[91] Van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25–27*, 31.

[92] See Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Proverbs and Wisdom Books of the Ancient Near East: The Factual History of a Literary Form," *TynBul* 28 (1977): 6–14; Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993). For a more recent reconstruction of the transmission history of Proverbs that runs contrary to the typical view, see David McLain Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 403–31.

[93] Michael V. Fox, "Wisdom and the Self-Presentation of Wisdom Literature," in *Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of David J. A. Clines*, ed. David J. A. Clines, J. Cheryl Exum, and H. G. M. Williamson, JSOTSup 373 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 153–72; Christopher B. Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son, and Make My Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs*, BZAW 422 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 43; Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Bible and Literature (Decatur, GA: Almond, 1985), 48.

[94] Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

the possibility that the concept of God has an operational rather than a merely notional (presuppositional) function. In other words, theology in Proverbs does not merely serve pragmatic, pedagogical, or rhetorical concerns; theology also makes propositional claims that have epistemological and anthropological entailments.

CHAPTER 3

DIVINE AGENCY AND CREATION ORDER

In the previous chapter, I examined how divine agency in Proverbs is commonly viewed as incompatible with human agency. YHWH's active intervention in human affairs is typically thought of as inconsequential to human agency. Whereas the subject matter of the previous chapter is the divine-human relationship, this chapter focuses on the relationship between divine agency and creation. I shall examine how divine agency is eclipsed by the concept of creation order and relegated to a supportive role.

The ascendency of the concept of order to the theological center of the book of Proverbs has at least two ramifications. First, this inevitably results in a notion of divine agency that is undifferentiated from creation order. Divine action is interpreted as non-interventionist and passive. Second, when the concept of order takes on a mechanistic meaning, human and divine agency are subsumed under the operative force of a deterministic order. It is difficult or inconsistent to maintain the authenticity of agency and responsibility for both God and human beings. Hence, there are generally two mutually exclusive views of causality and free will: (1) event-causation (i.e., events causing events) and (2) agent-causation (i.e., agents causing events).[1] It is not the purpose of this work to explicate a philosophy of causality in Proverbs in detail. Nevertheless, philosophical discussion on these matters may help inform our interpretation of Proverbs by asking whether the Israelite sages maintained such a concept of the created order. I

[1] See Randolph Clarke, "Agent Causation and Event Causation in the Production of Free Action," *Philosophical Topics* 24, no. 2 (1996): 19–48. See also Bas C. van Fraassen, *Laws and Symmetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 7–12; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 117–23.

will argue here that the idea of the created order as understood by its proponents is not incompatible with divine intervention.

Furthermore, the book of Proverbs appears to focus more on divine and human agency than on the notion of an impersonal order at work behind the scenes. Hence, in the language of modern philosophy, Proverbs is more akin to an agent-causation model than to an event-causation model. However, within the agent-causation model, there could be different ways of relating agents with causation, notwithstanding that these relations can also be described as a notion of universal order. Nevertheless, as I will argue, divine agency in Proverbs is all-pervasive and able to influence human agents. It suggests that human agency, though free and responsible, is nevertheless dependent on divine agency.[2] As such, I will espouse and defend a compatibilist view of agent causation in Proverbs.

Subsuming Divine Agency under Creation Order

In this section, I will sketch how the concept of world order came to take the place of divine agency in modern wisdom scholarship through influential scholars like Klaus Koch, Harmut Gese, Hans Heinrich Schmid, and Walther Zimmerli. I will underscore how divine freedom—God's sovereignty to intervene as he wishes—is perceived as standing in tension with a Kochian concept of world order.

Since Koch published his "Gibt Es Ein Vergeltungsdogma Im Alten Testament?"[3] in 1955, the concept of world order has steadily gained prominence in the study of Proverbs.[4] Focusing his analysis on what he calls the "oldest section of the book

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[2] This stands contrary to a libertarian understanding of free will.

[3] Klaus Koch, "Gibt Es Ein Vergeltungsdogma Im Alten Testament?," *ZTK* 52, no. 1 (1955): 1–42. English translation: Klaus Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, Issues in Religion and Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

[4] See Zoltán S. Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of the Book of Proverbs: Selfishness and Secularity Reconsidered*, JTISup (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 16–17.

of Proverbs" (Prov 25–29), Koch argues that the consequences that follow the actions in these Proverbs are not due to divine retribution. Rather the act-consequence connection (*Tun-Ergehen Zusammenhang*)[5] is inherently built into the relationship between actions and consequences like the laws of nature where "an action *inevitably* is followed by a reaction."[6] Koch understands retribution in a "juridical sense of a higher authority who deals out reward and punishment on the basis of an established norm."[7] He argues that there is no sign of an external force intervening to mete out punishments or rewards in the non-Yahwistic sayings. Rather, the actions and the consequences are simply connected to each other. There is no apodictic differentiation in the type of actions and their attendant consequences as in a juridical process. Koch argues that even in the Yahwistic sayings (Prov 25:21–22) found in the oldest collection, God does not function in a juridical sense but is like a "midwife who assists at a birth by facilitating the completion of something which previous human action has already set in motion."[8] Koch then extends his non-retributive view of divine agency to the other parts of the OT. In his view, the act-consequence connection functions analogously to Newtonian law whereby divine intervention is either unnecessary or merely serves to complete the consequences of human actions. "Yahweh merely promises to maintain an ethical order in the world."[9] In this way, Koch's account of causation in Proverbs is a closed system and excludes divine intervention on human subjects. Divine agency is allowed but must be subsumed under the concept of world order. We shall further examine Koch's construal of divine agency

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[5] This was a phrase coined by Klaus Koch in his article "Gibt Es Ein Vergeltungsdogma Im Alten Testament?," 34. However, the idea probably originated from Johannes Pedersen. See Hartmut Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit; Studien zu den Sprüchen Salomos und zu dem Buche Hiob* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958), 42.

[6] Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," 58 (italics mine). Koch's reliance on the Newtonian understanding of physical laws is evident.

[7] Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?,"60–61.

[8] Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?,"61.

[9] Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," 68.

in relation to the notion of world order/natural law. Though major correctives against Koch are aimed at his impersonal, mechanistic understanding of the act-consequence nexus for an emphasis on personal agency, not much has been said about Koch's view of the relationship between the natural order and divine intervention.[10] As such, Koch can maintain that God is a co-worker, though not a judge, of the moral order.

At this juncture, it suffices to note that Koch's understanding of retribution is unnecessarily limited to a jurisprudence according to an "established norm." He assumes that if no established norms are detectable from a Proverbial aphorism, then it follows that retribution is absent.[11] The main problem with this approach is that it does not allow Proverbs to shape one's understanding of divine retribution. Koch does not provide a biblical warrant for why he thinks every notion of retribution must explicitly reference an "established norm." There is no logical or theological necessity that the absence of divine retribution follows an absence of any detectable established norms.

In his *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der Alten Weisheit* (1958), Gese accepts, with caveats, Koch's concept of *Tun-Ergehen Zusammenhang* but grounds Israel's early wisdom in the Egyptian concept of divine order in Egyptian Ma'at. Gese employs this concept of order to challenge Zimmerli's assertion of autonomy in Israel's wisdom. Gese maintains two key emphases in his understanding of creation order: (1) God is the Creator of the order that governs humanity, and (2) humanity has an inadequate understanding of this created order.[12] Rather than working autonomously, the sages find themselves in submission to this world order.[13] Extending Koch's analogous use of

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[10] For a list of various objections to Koch, see John G. Gammie, "Theology of Retribution in the Book of Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 32, no. 1 (1970): 3–5.

[11] This view is also taken up by John Barton, who contends for natural law as one of the bases of OT ethics. See John Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 32–44.

[12] Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 39.

[13] Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 35.

natural law, Gese even affirms the existence of a *naturgesetzlichen Weise* by appealing to the correspondence between natural causation and the deed-consequence nexus in Proverbs 25:23 and 26:20 while overlooking the plausibility of a rhetorical interpretation.[14]

However, as a direct rebuttal of Koch's non-retributive interpretation, Gese argues that Israel's Yahwism, as seen in the Yahwistic sayings in Proverbs, has radically transformed the early wisdom that was derived from Egyptian Ma'at. Traditional wisdom is limited and cannot serve as an all-encompassing explanation of the world; the righteous can be in need (Prov 11:8; 12:13), whereas the wicked do prosper for a season (11:18; 13:22). Since traditional wisdom adopts a concept of the created order that is also found in the Egyptian concept of Ma'at, Gese argues that the contrast between Yahwism and conventional wisdom's view of world order is unique to Israel; the distinction is Israel's *Sondergut*. The distinctiveness of Yahwism is a divine determinism, without a parallel in any Egyptian thought, in which YHWH is independent of the created order.[15] Gese contends that the Yahwistic sayings are not merely supplementary but instill new meanings to the traditional wisdom. Though Yahwism introduces a tension between divine freedom (which is not bound to any order) and the Kochian concept of the created order, Gese maintains that we can still rightly speak of a doctrine of retribution in Proverbs. When Proverbs is read in context with the act-consequence nexus of traditional wisdom, Yahwism transforms Koch's doctrine of fate-producing actions into the thought that human destiny depends entirely on the free-acting grace of God.[16]

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[14] Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 35. Gese does not consider a rhetorical explanation for the juxtaposition of natural phenomena and Proverbial instructions. See Michael V. Fox, "World Order and Maat: A Crooked Parallel," *JANESCU* 23 (1995): 48; Fox, *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18B (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 788–89; Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 209.

[15] Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 46, 48–49. Gese argues that Prov 21:1 demonstrates YHWH's independence over the created order since YHWH can freely direct the king, who in the ancient world served as a guarantor of order.

[16] Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 49.

Gese's efforts have received mixed reactions. Against Gese, H. H. Schmid argues that the concept of the "free acting grace of God" is not unique to Israelite wisdom.[17] As Schmid recognizes, that YHWH is the one who brings about the connection between deed and consequences is no different from the understanding of Israel's neighbors. It is unfortunate that Gese bases his argument for divine freedom on the claim that this theological point was Israel's *Sondergut*. To undermine Gese's arguments, Schmid simply demonstrates that the same ideas existed in Egyptian literature. Schmid's goal is to establish that the theologization of Israelite wisdom was completely in tandem with ancient oriental understandings. Schmid grants that YHWH is more than the executor of the deed-consequence nexus, but Schimid is reticent about whether YHWH operates independently of the world order.[18] However, Schmid argues via the hypostasization of wisdom that wisdom has no interest in any systematic view of theism.[19] God is only spoken of in close relation to the accomplishments of the sages in terms of cosmos-creating behaviors. Due to wisdom's lack of concern for theology or a systematic theism, wisdom is thus "fundamentally anti-theistic."[20]

Since wisdom is allegedly unconcerned with theology, this supposition allows Schmid to expand the concept of world order as corresponding to the notion of legal order to the rest of the OT. Schmid builds his thesis concerning legal order upon his observation that the concept of world order is not limited to Egyptian Ma'at but is also a common currency of thought in the ancient Near Eastern world. He concludes that "ancient Near Eastern cosmic, political, and social order finds their unity under the

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[17] Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit: eine Untersuchung zur altorientalischen und israelitischen Weisheitsliteratur* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966), 148.

[18] Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte*, 147–48.

[19] Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte*, 153–55.

[20] Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte*, 155.

concept of 'creation'."[21] For Schmid, the integral relationship between creation theology and cosmic-politico-social order best explains the magical-mechanistic relationship between acts and consequences as set forth by Koch—"why an offense in the legal realm obviously has effects in the realm of nature (drought, famine) or in the political sphere (threat of the enemy)."[22]

By placing the accent of his investigation on creation order, Schmid seeks to explain all instances of divine action in terms of creation order. Not only do "views of creation provide the framework within which assertions about history are made," but also history (i.e., "the historical action of Yahweh") is taken as "the implementation of creation and the actualization of the order of creation."[23] Hence, the promise-fulfillment motif in the OT is also "conceived from the view of the order of the world."[24] Even Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from Egypt is consonant with the concept of world order in terms of divine creation and the maintenance of the order of a people's existence.

Schmid's work was so influential that James Crenshaw declares that "it is no longer necessary to justify the claim that the concept of order lies at the heart of wisdom thinking."[25] Schmid is correct to emphasize the pervasiveness of creation theology in the OT wisdom. As Katerine Dell explains, "Human experience is not divorced from the realm of God who stands behind it as the orderer and creator, nor is God divorced from humanity in that he reveals himself in all human experience and in the created world."[26]

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[21] Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte*, 155.

[22] Hans Heinrich Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation: 'Creation Theology' as the Broad Horizon of Biblical Theology," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson, Issues in Religion and Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 105.

[23] Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation," 108.

[24] Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation," 109.

[25] James L. Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, Library of Biblical Studies (New York: Ktav, 1976), 27.

[26] Katharine J. Dell, *Get Wisdom, Get Insight: An Introduction to Israel's Wisdom Literature* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 30.

However, the equation of creation theology with Schmid's concept of creation order is problematic. While Schmid does not think that there is any contradiction between divine action and world order, he echoes Koch's non-interventionist understanding of causation by asserting that the "inner force of the order of creation" must be understood as the same as the Creator's action.[27] This understanding has the effect of confining divine action to the notion of order and blocking out external divine intervention.[28] In this way, the concept of creation order subsumes all divine activity in the OT and paves the way for the scholarly tendency to introduce what Roland Murphy calls a "buffer zone of order [that] comes between the sage and the Lord."[29]

Gese's rebuttal of Zimmerli's anthropocentric reading has also stimulated Zimmerli's rejoinder. Gese's emphasis on world order has caused Zimmerli to abandon the concept of eudemonism in Proverbs. In his rejoinder, Zimmerli seeks to anchor his emphasis on human autonomy in the creation of man. Nevertheless, while Zimmerli concedes to setting the notion of a "fixed order" as central to Proverbial wisdom, he posits a tension between divine freedom and the created order. Accordingly, the incorporation of older wisdom (Prov 10–31) with late wisdom (Prov 1–9)—which accentuates the authority of wisdom—suggests that divine freedom—which is of such prominence in older wisdom—"runs the risk of being pushed back in favor of a God who can only react in the setting of the order known by the wise man."[30] In Zimmerli's view,

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[27] Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation," 106. Schmid is in general agreement with Koch's rejection of divine retribution in Proverbs but amends Koch's *Tat-Ergehen-Zusammenhang* ("act-consequence connection") to a *Haltung-Ergehen-Zusammenhang* ("attitude-consequence connection") (Schmid, 164). Cf. Koch, "Gibt Es Ein Vergeltungsdogma Im Alten Testament?," 34. Schmid modifies Skladny's *Haltung-Schicksal-Zusammenhangs* ("attitude-fate nexus"). See Udo Skladny, *Die Ältesten Spruchsammlungen in Israel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 15.

[28] Cf. Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 46n73.

[29] Roland E. Murphy, "Religious Dimensions of Israelite Wisdom," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 138.

[30] Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (1964): 155.

Proverbs as a whole presents a God who is free to intervene, a view that stands in tension with a God who is constrained by the order discoverable by humanity. Accordingly, this tension is characteristic of wisdom texts that bring the problem of theodicy to the fore (e.g., Job; Pss 37, 49, 73; Eccl) with emphases on human beings questioning God. This tension is eventually resolved in the book of Ecclesiastes.[31] Nevertheless, Proverbial wisdom heightens this tension with its emphasis on creation order. Thus, by upholding this tension between God's freedom and the concept of world order (in a non-interventionist sense) that is resolved not in Proverbs but in Ecclesiastes, Zimmerli undermines Gese's attempt to ground wisdom in the YHWH's freedom over creation order.

We have already seen von Rad's dialectical approach to human and divine agency, reason, and faith. According to von Rad, the accent of faith, however, falls on a reliable order and in the God who "put these orders into operation," echoing Koch-Schmid's non-interventionist conception of creation order.[32] Von Rad makes creation order, rather than divine activity, the grounds of the sages' contemplation. He equates wisdom with world order and argues that wisdom is the "self-revelation of creation."[33] The application of the language of revelation to creation order deliberately sets world order as the alternative to divine activity through revelation. As we will see below, not only is such dichotomizing of creation order from divine action (e.g., retribution) unnecessary in the interpretation of Proverbs, but also the regularity we observe in Proverbs may be better accounted for in the language of agency.

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[31] For Ecclessiates presents a corrective and the limits of autonomous wisdom. Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," 155–58.

[32] Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 63, 155n12.

[33] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 164.

The subjugation of God to the concept of order in von Rad's thought is more lucid when one compares Gese's conclusion to von Rad's. Gese does not consider a dialectical relationship between the divine and human in older wisdom or capitulate to Koch's objection to divine retribution in Proverbs. Rather, Gese perceives the incorporation of Yahwistic sayings as radically altering the act-consequence, world-order thinking that Israel's sages inherited from their ancient neighbors. The expressions that speak of Yahweh's freedom and sovereignty render human destiny contingent on divine activity. Hence, Gese avers that the acquisition of wisdom is dependent on God's free exercise of grace.[34] In contrast to von Rad, Gese can speak of faith in the *Gerechtigkeit und die Treue des persönlichen Gottes* ("the justice and the faithfulness of the personal God"), rather than faith in the created order.[35] Von Rad is aware of this problem when he raises the question "Is it faith in the orders or faith in Yahweh?"[36]

As seen above, Koch's mechanistic conception of creation order has influenced scholars to adopt different perspectives on the relationship between divine action and creation order. Gese argues that divine freedom is independent of creation order and that the notion of the created order is not fundamentally opposed to divine actions. Schmid contends that divine actions can be construed in terms of the workings of a created order. Zimmerli maintains that a tension exists between divine freedom and creation order within the book of Proverbs. Echoing Schmid's view, von Rad subsumes divine action under the concept of order. We will need to examine the relationship between creation order and God in greater detail below. It suffices to note here that for von Rad and others, the displacement of divine intervention (i.e., divine agency) by the concept of world order

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[34] See Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 50.

[35] See Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 78. This is a point that I distill from von Rad's contrasts of early wisdom with a late wisdom that "could be gained from divine guidance, from divine blessing or punishment." Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 69.

[36] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 95. Roland Murphy highlights von Rad's concession in Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom and Creation," *JBL* 104, no. 1 (March 1985): 9n18.

has resulted in the casting of God's active role to the periphery of wisdom thought and has reframed how we should understand the role of divine agency apart from a revelatory model.

"Order-Thinking" and Natural Law

Koch's concept of a fate-producing deed (*schicksalwirkend*) and its attendant *OrdnungsDenken* (order-thinking) in Israel—a notion that excludes divine intervention[37]—has been subjected to scrutiny and criticism especially with regard to the alleged parallel with Egyptian Ma'at. Notably, Michael Fox refutes a mechanistic understanding of Ma'at and world order in Israelite wisdom.[38] Rather, both Ma'at and Israelite order embrace the centrality of divine intervention and divine agency. Highlighting the inextricable link between Ma'at and Egyptian religion as well as the loss of Ma'at's meaning outside of the Egyptian context, Fox concludes that "the idea of Ma'at did not and could not exist in Israel . . . . Only by stripping Ma'at of its distinctive character can one even claim to find a parallel in Israel . . . . [T]he parallel [however] is not to Ma'at but to a scholarly construct."[39] Hence, attempts to justify the existence of a concept of order in Israelite wisdom as analogous to Egyptian Ma'at are unconvincing, and the deduction of a mechanistic (i.e., non-interventionist and automatic) notion of order is far more tenuous than Koch and his followers claim it to be.

However, an oft-overlooked influence on Koch's mechanistic notion of order is the physical sciences, even though empiricism is widely used to describe wisdom

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[37] According to Murphy, Koch's conception of order places God "outside of this 'order' making him unnecessary." Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom and Yahwism," in *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of John L. McKenzie*, ed. James W. Flanagan and Anita W. Robinson (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 121–22.

[38] Fox, "World Order and Maat," 41–42.

[39] Fox, "World Order and Maat," 42.

thought.[40] Von Rad acknowledges that scholars have to rely on familiar concepts such as "orders," the "inner law" of creation, or "secular understanding of the world" to describe the thought-world of Israelite wisdom.[41] As mentioned above, Koch has no problem drawing an analogy between his deed-consequence nexus and the Newtonian concept of law. Gese, too, argues for the presence of a natural-law way of thinking in Proverbs.[42] Similarly, von Rad argues against the existence of "direct divine intervention" in those Proverbial sentences characterized by an act-consequence nexus by appealing to the working out of the inner/inherent necessity of the act and consequence.[43]

It is vital to state that the Kochian account of the deed-consequence nexus is similar to a non-interventionist account of the laws of nature in modern science. For example, J. Kellenberger depicts the predominant view thus: "Natural miracles occur through God's agency; they are not instances of God's direct action. There is no intervention by God, but God, as creator, is deemed thankable for establishing the ground of natural events."[44] This perspective is in line with Immanuel Kant's earlier assertion that "all nature . . . determines itself through the mechanism of its forces, has a certain rightness in its consequences and satisfies the rules of propriety without being forced to."[45] Accordingly, the laws of nature are deemed inviolable. Divine intervention would

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[40] Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte*, 96, 158; William McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, Studies in Biblical Theology 44 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1965), 53; cf. Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 59.

[41] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 6–7. Though von Rad also asserts that "we abandon the rigidity of the modern, popular scientific understanding of reality and try to enter into that ancient biblical idea of reality," the imposition of a scientific understanding of order upon wisdom studies is left uncritiqued (pp. 78–79).

[42] Even the Egyptian concept of Ma'at might have originally been derived from physical geometrical terms that meant "straightness" and "evenness." As such, there is a historical precedent in the association of ethical concept with physical ones. See Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (1973; repr., London: Routledge, 2004), 113.

[43] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 132.

[44] J. Kellenberger, "Miracles," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 3 (1979): 157.

[45] Immanuel Kant, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 1:224–25.

contradict the divine maintenance of the created order since God would violate the inviolable order that he himself has established.[46] I contend that Koch and his followers have adopted such a notion of the created order with varying consistency.

Koch's borrowing of the scientific concept of natural laws for his understanding of the act-consequence nexus in Proverbs reflects the tendency in modernist philosophy to discuss universal ideas in terms of the laws of nature—with the characteristics of universality, regularity, and predictability.[47] With the success of Isaac Newton's law of conservation of energy, David Hume's empiricism, and Immanuel Kant's *Critiques*, metaphysics is relegated to the periphery; only a notional employment of metaphysics is permitted.[48] Interestingly, in stark similarity with the debates in the philosophy of science concerning whether a "law of nature" is an ontological reality of the universe or merely a scholarly construct (hence, laws of science), the concept of world order in Proverbs has undergone similar debates. For example, Murphy's contention that the search for order is a modern construct has gained a following as well as stimulated various rejoinders.[49]

There are at least two problems with thinking of wisdom's order as analogous to physical laws. First, debates on the laws of nature as well as wisdom's concept of world order bring the problem of definition to the fore. For example, Fox notes that the "fuzziness of the term 'order' makes the theory hard to evaluate and criticize."[50] There is

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[46] As Nicholas Saunders problematizes it, "How can God uphold the laws of nature with one hand, whilst simultaneously overriding them by performing miracles with the other?" Nicholas Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 48.

[47] Van Fraassen, *Laws and Symmetry*, 1–5, 24–33. For an account of the relationship between the physical sciences and OT theology, see also Frederick C. Prussner and John H. Hayes, *Old Testament Theology: Its History and Development* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 41–42.

[48] Van Fraassen, *Laws and Symmetry*, 6–9; Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 48–82.

[49] Murphy, "Wisdom and Yahwism," 120–23. For an overview of the debate, see J. A. Loader, *Proverbs 1–9*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 19–28.

[50] Fox, "World Order and Maat," 40.

also a tendency among philosophers of science to define "order" in such a way that excludes divine intervention. C. S. Lewis notably points out Hume's circular reasoning in defining the laws of nature in such a way that excludes divine intervention and then concluding that no miracles can take place.[51] With respect to wisdom studies, E. Pax has criticized Koch's narrow juridical definition of "retribution" that excludes direct divine action. Instead of rendering divine action merely in a supportive role of mechanistic causality, Pax contends that retribution can be defined as "the rewarding and punishing reaction of God to the good and bad deeds of men."[52] Pax's critique of Koch's rejection of divine retribution highlights the problem of understanding the interrelationship between divine action and the concept of order in causality. Should the regularity of a cause and an effect necessarily exclude divine intervention? The Kochian view does not consider other options for understanding the relationship between causality and divine intervention. As we will see below, even those who support an inviolable law of nature can accommodate divine intervention as part of the natural law that God instituted.[53] The Kochian understanding of causality and order is unnecessarily limited.

This does not mean that there is no problem with the term "retribution." The term does connote a negative divine action that excludes blessings and rewards.[54] As such, theologians have opted to speak broadly of "special divine action" (SDA)—referring to God's actions in "a particular time and place in creation"—as distinct from

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[51] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 107.

[52] E. Pax, *Studien zum Vergeltungsproblem der Psalmen*, Studii Biblici Franciscani Liber Annuus 11 (Jerusalem: n.p., 1960), 62, quoted in Gammie, "Theology of Retribution," 3–4.

[53] For example, all possibilities of divine intervention can be included as part of the regular workings of natural law. See Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 62.

[54] Cf. James L. Crenshaw, "The Concept of God in Old Testament Wisdom," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johston Wiseman (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 3–4. Richard J. Clifford avers that the term is too negative to speak about rewards. Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 19.

"general divine action" (GDA)—referring to God's universal and simultaneous actions, such as the initial creation and the maintenance of creation.[55]

Second, the analogy between physical laws and the creation orderliness of the act-consequence nexus is not without problems. For one, it might lead to a moral determinism analogous to a physical determinism emptied of human responsibility. If by physical laws one speaks of law as an ontological necessity of causality in the natural world, then the act-consequence nexus also assumes that such a necessity is "built into" creation. When applied to the moral and ethical realm, the concept of order that reflects a necessity located outside of human agents easily leads to a determinism (which von Rad avers) that leads to the elimination of personal responsibility.[56] If this is taken to its logical conclusion, then one must admit that there is ultimately no hope for the אויל ("the fool") in Proverbs 24:7 and 27:22 and that he does not bear the blame for his actions.

Furthermore, an ontological concept of order portrays God as merely sustaining and maintaining the necessary act-consequence nexus like a "midwife who assists at a birth."[57] Hence, the exercise of divine freedom to intervene is perceived as a contravention of these causal relationships. According to this understanding, one form of divine action is pitted against another—a periodic divine intervention against God's continual creative action.[58] The strict distinction between divine intervention and God's continual action of sustaining creation is espoused by Rylaarsdam and lucidly maintained by Walter Brueggemann and Claus Westermann (see chap. 4). Koch's paradigm echoes

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[55] Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 21.

[56] As von Rad asserts, "The experience of inherent determinism and of intrinsic value is everywhere present in the sentences of old wisdom." Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 60.

[57] Koch, "Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," 61.

[58] Koch is aware of the contradiction between divine intervention—that "Yahweh intervenes in human affair and designates the consequences of a particular action"—and his proposal of an orderly nexus of consequence built into every action. Nevertheless, Koch allows only for a notion of divine intervention that merely sets "in motion and bringing to completion" the inherent order built into creation: the "Sin-Disaster Connection on the one hand and the Good Action-Blessings-Connection on the other." Koch, "Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," 62.

more of those who subsume special divine action under general divine action in modern science than what can be theologically derived from the book of Proverbs.[59] I am not aware of any passage in Proverbs that pits divine intervention against creative action or suggests that the two forms of divine actions are mutually exclusive.

More importantly, the assertion that the concept of order is derived from some ontological necessity does not necessarily lead to either physical determinism or the exclusion of divine intervention. This point is not considered by von Rad, who simply leaves determinism and divine intervention as dialectical tensions that need no resolution.[60] Even a necessitarian account of natural law can accommodate a concept of divine intervention (SDA).[61] If YHWH is indeed the transcendent Creator, as depicted in the book of Proverbs, then it is logically consistent and plausible that God could have made the inherent necessity of creation order to include the need for divine intervention. In summary, there is no logical or philosophical rationale for excluding divine intervention from the necessitarian view of creation order.

Another way of construing the moral order of Proverbs emphasizes the subjectivity of order-thinking—similar to what Nicholas Saunders terms an instrumentalist account of law.[62] The concept of order is not independent of the mind of the sages. Order is not so much an ontological necessity in creation but a conceptual organization of the real-world experiences of the sages.[63] "The laws of nature," notes

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[59] Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 23–29.

[60] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 60–63.

[61] According to Saunders, "The necessitarian account makes the claim that physical laws ontologically determine which possibilities are open to the world and which are not." Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 66. Thus, the regularity of cause and effects in the act-consequence nexus in Proverbial sentences stems from such ontological necessity built into creation. For a discussion on the necessitarian account of law, see Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 66–69.

[62] Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 64–65.

[63] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 124–74. Von Rad's attempt to balance both the objective realization of the order and the subjective experience of Israelite sages is a departure from Schmid's influential assertion that the concept of order in Israel's sages becomes increasingly rigid, dogmatic, and removed from reality. See Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte*, 163–64.

Saunders, "are to be seen as wholly a construction of the rational mind on observed regularities in nature."[64] Notably, Schmid appears to adhere to this conception of order. Accordingly, while the sages began with a general view of order that corresponds to reality, Israelite wisdom, however, becomes increasingly rigid, dogmatic, and removed from reality; this eventually leads to a crisis of wisdom marked by skepticism.[65]

Here is also where von Rad's view appears contradictory. On the one hand, von Rad would affirm the ontological necessity of the act-consequence nexus resulting in an inherent determinism. On the other hand, his account of the sages' knowledge of the world, their discernment of an intrinsic order, and their knowledge of divine power are fundamentally based on their subjective empirical experiences. The notion of inherent laws within the act-consequence nexus is a notion derived from the sages' attempt to find meaning in the contingent events of life.[66] If this is the case, then how can the sages' subjective and limited grasp of causality be considered an ontological necessity to the degree of determinism that rules out divine intervention?

More importantly, a subjective notion of order and law is not incompatible with divine intervention. If the concept of order is a subjective organization of observable regularities in life, then it follows that the sense of order must be limited to what is perceptible by human senses (hence, empiricism). In other words, the instrumentalist account of the laws of nature "function[s] to delimit the possibilities which rational minds expect nature to pursue."[67] This perspective does not rule out divine intervention because it is not making any ontological claims. When it is stressed that divine intervention can occur in ways hidden from what is observable, the possibility of divine intervention in the

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[64] Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 65.

[65] See Schmid's discussion of the antithetical sentences in Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte*, 163–64.

[66] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 124.

[67] Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 65.

experiences of the sages opens up. As Gese rightly states, there is a "hiddenness" of justice that humans cannot grasp totally.[68] His statement is a defense of the notion that the upset of order in some proverbs is due neither to the abolition of order from the divine will nor to the fragility of order but to humankind's inability to comprehend things. Similarly, Fox distinguishes a predictable order from a mechanistic order. A predictable order is not inviolable and allows for the limits of human understanding and the inscrutability of divine action, whereas a mechanistic order automatically connects deeds with consequences.[69]

Certainly, on an instrumentalist account of order, divine intervention is both plausible and compatible; albeit, such an account of divine intervention is not without its problems.[70] There is, however, no need to present the concept of order and divine intervention in a dialectical or diametrically opposing manner.

Order or Agency? Toward an Agent Causation Understanding of Proverbs

We have seen that the concept of order, whether understood as an ontological necessity or a human construct, does not necessarily exclude divine intervention. Some scholars, reacting against the necessitarian concept of a deterministic or static order, have sought to debunk such order-thinking. Notably, Murphy demurs that the analogies between regularities of the natural world and moral instructions imply a shared notion of an "all-embracing order that regulates human conduct."[71] Rather than making creation order the center of wisdom thought, Murphy focuses on human and divine agency. Proverbs is largely concerned with both human and divine actions. It is not necessary to

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[68] Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 39.

[69] Fox, "World Order and Maat," 40.

[70] Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*, 66.

[71] Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 116.

appeal to a notion of an order that stands between Israel and YHWH because (1) the correlations of actions and consequences in Proverbial aphorisms focus on human activity and serve pedagogical functions and (2) YHWH is the primary causal agent in human affairs.[72]

Along similar lines, Lennart Boström has launched a sustained critique on the concept of order, what some scholars called the *synthetische Lebensauffassung* ("synthetic view of life").[73] Boström's studies underscore the centrality of divine and human agency in place of an impersonal order. Key to his rebuttal is his examination and critique of a strict act-consequence nexus in Proverbs, which renders consequences as automatically built into actions, without any need of divine intervention. Boström contends that YHWH's active and free involvement in retribution, the ambivalence of the agents carrying out the negative consequences, and the emphasis on human choice and responsibility undermine Koch's idea of the inseparability of the act-consequence nexus. Boström seeks to rehabilitate Koch's act-consequence nexus into a character-consequence nexus that could be rightly called an agency of consequences.

Divine Retribution in Proverbs

First, beginning with an examination of the Yahwistic sayings in Proverbs, Boström directly challenges Koch's non-retributive view of the act-consequence nexus by underscoring YHWH's active involvement in the consequences of one's actions.[74] YHWH is portrayed as actively involved in the storing-up (צפן) of sound wisdom, the protection of the wise, and—specific to retribution—the preservation of the way of justice (משפט ארחות; Prov 2:6–8). The consequence of one's piety and devotion to

[72] Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 116.

[73] See Gerlinde Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1–9: Traditionsgeschichtliche und Theologische Studien*, FAT 16 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 4.

[74] See Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*, ConBOT (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 94–96.

YHWH is YHWH's active blessing (Prov 3:5–10). Such a consequence is in line with one's obedient response:[75]

> Knowing God in all your ways (דרכיך) → the making straight (יישר) of your path (ארחתיך)
>
> Aligning one's eyes and the turning [one's being] from evil → the healing and restoration of one's body and bones
>
> Honoring YHWH from one's wealth and produce → the filling of one's storehouse and the bursting of one's wine press.

Though there is a close, though not inseparable, correspondence between act/character and consequence, divine activity is, nevertheless, central. At times, the divine reaction to one's disposition makes retribution explicitly clear: to the mockers (לצים) God will mock (יליץ; Prov 3:34).[76] Furthermore, YHWH is depicted as the judge who holds humans responsible for their actions (5:21–23; 24:11–12; 29:26).[77] Divine retribution, however, is not limited to a juridical sense. YHWH pleads the cause of the poor (יריב ריבם) and robs their robbers (וקבע את־קבעיהם) of life (22:23). Proverbs 23:11 is the only other occurrence of the יריב ריבם construction in Proverbs. Reading 23:11 with 22:23 suggests that YHWH acts as the redeemer (גאל) of the poor in meting out retribution against their oppressors.[78] There are also the admonitions to abstain from vengeance and to do good to one's enemy while trusting in YHWH to save or reward (20:22; 25:21–22). These admonitions consider the exacting of justice YHWH's sole prerogative.[79] Boström's retributive reading of Proverbs 25:21–22 is further bolstered by

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[75] While Boström rightly points out the active involvement of YHWH in Prov 3:5–10, the following observations are mine.

[76] Boström states that this passage is "very close to strict retribution." See Boström, *God of the Sages*, 98. Waltke states that this verse implies the principle of *lex talionis*. Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 273.

[77] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 99, 111.

[78] A reading suggested by McKane and followed by Boström. See William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 379–80; and Boström, *God of the Sages*, 106.

[79] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 110.

Josef Scharbert's rebuttal of Koch's construal of שלם as "make complete."[80] Scharbert concludes that שלם can mean "retribution" (*Vergeltung*) as repayment for good and bad deeds without a juridical context.[81]

Re-Examination of the Act-Consequence Nexus

Second, Boström seeks to undermine the "strict causal nexus between actions and consequences" in Koch's reading of Proverbial aphorisms.[82] Here, Boström does not deny the relationship between actions and consequences in Proverbial sayings. Instead, he argues that the consequences are caused by agents rather than by a mechanism of order built into creation. Boström notes the predilection of Proverbial aphorisms toward the formulation of negative consequences in a passive or impersonal sense. He contends that the passive and impersonal formulations were intended to maintain an openness toward the different possibilities of the human agents of the consequences. The ambiguity of how or by whom the consequences will be meted out has the effect of shifting the focus from the orderliness of the act-consequence nexus to the responsibility of human agents.

To undermine the Kochian act-consequence nexus, Boström offers an alternative explanation for the aphorisms in which there appears to be a strict connection between actions and consequences. Chief among these sayings are the passages that speak of the consequences' returning to the performers of the deed. For example, the wicked lie in wait of their own blood (Prov 1:18), and the path of those who profit from

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[80] Josef Scharbert, "Šlm im Alten Testament," in *Um das Prinzip der Vergeltung in Religion und Recht des Alten Testaments*, ed. Klaus Koch, Wege der Forschung (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), 300–24.

[81] Cf. Boström, *God of the Sages*, 138–39.

[82] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 116.

ill-gotten gains (בצע) will end up taking away (יקח) their own lives (1:19).[83] The turning away of the simple is said to slay them (תהרגם; 1:32). Also, the wicked will fall by his own wickedness (11:5), and by the desire of the treacherous, he shall be caught (11:6). The wicked who digs a pit for others will fall into it himself (26:27), and the seducer of the upright will fall into his own pit (28:10). Contrary to Schmid's assertion that the antithetical sayings in Proverbs 10–15 depict a hardening of the concept of order and a growing alienation from reality, Boström suggests that these sayings simply serve a hortatory function to promote "the ethical righteousness of the sages with all its implications" by furnishing a call to choose the right path.[84] Here, it is apparent that Boström conflates the "world in the text" with the "world behind the text"—the pedagogical thrust of the Proverbial sayings with the question of the worldview that gave rise to such expressions. The pedagogical thrust of choosing the right way is not necessarily antithetical to the Kochian concept of order. The recognition of a strict relationship between action and consequence might even intensify the pedagogy of warning against wickedness and folly.

Better is Boström's suggestion that the self-destructiveness of evil plays an important part in understanding the relationship between action and consequences in passages where there are reflexive consequences upon human actions. There is an irony in the returning of the evil-doers wicked scheme upon themselves in Proverbs 1:18–19. The wicked scheme they sought to carry out in 1:11—to lie in wait for blood (נארבה לדם) and to ambush the innocent (נצפנה לנקי)—undergoes a reversal through the sages' view of reality. The wicked will end up lying in wait for their own blood (יארבו לדמם) and

[83] Waltke infers that בצע is the subject of the verb יקח. The point here is that the profiteers are engaged in self-destruction by their ill-gotten gains. Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 196–97.

[84] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 119.

ambushing their own lives (יצפנו לנפשׁתם).[85] Here, the sages do not appeal to an impersonal order of cause and effect. They do not provide any reason for why they thin the evil-doers' efforts will be in vain (חִנָּם) and returned unto themselves, only that it will happen as they have said. The emphasis, rather, is on those who perform the wicked deeds for unjust gains, as summarized in 1:19: "So are the paths of all who profit from violence; it shall take away the life of its possessor."[86] The theme of the self-destructiveness of evil reappears in 5:21–23. The iniquities of the evil doer will ensnare him (ילכדנו), and he will be held (יתמך) by the cords of his sin. Although it is not stated how the deeds of the wicked will return unto themselves in 1:11–19, the context of 5:21–23 suggests that YHWH's scrutiny of a man's ways has a role to play. In both passages on the self-destruction of the wicked, the agency of human responsibility is emphatically in view, even though the agent(s) of actualizing the consequences can be either unstated or suggested to involve divine intervention. As such, the passages listed by Koch as implying that there is an automatic reflex of consequence upon one's actions can be explained by the self-destructiveness of evil that highlights personal responsibility.

As we have seen, a more plausible explanation for the perceived connection between actions and consequences is the notion of agency and responsibility rather than a mechanistic order. Boström further underscores that while the locus of interpretation rests on the responsibility of the agents performing the actions, the text leaves open to different possibilities as the identity of the agents who will actualize the consequences.

Also, on a number of occasions, there is a mix of ambiguity and specificity concerning the agents of negative consequences. The warning passages against the

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[85] Garrett notes that the *inclusio* of 1:11, 18 strengthens the notion of self-destructiveness. See Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 69–70.

[86] Several scholars have read Prov 1:11–19 as portraying the self-destructiveness of evil-doers, including Franz Delitzsch. Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*, trans. M. G. Easton, Clark's Foreign Theological Library, vol. 43 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1882), 66. See also Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 89–90.

adulterer in Proverbs 2, 5, and 6 provide a case in point. On the one hand, 2:16–19, 5:5–6, and 6:29 state that the adulterer's way leads to certain death and punishment. On the other hand, 6:34 speaks of the merciless vengeance of the husband. Thus, while the instructions remain opaque regarding the identity of the agent who will carry the punishment on the adulterer, it also points to the husband as the ruthless agent of retribution.[87] Similarly, the openness concerning how a generous benefactor will get rich and the events leading to a miser's state of impoverishment in Prov 11:24–25 is juxtaposed with the explicit reference to a community's curse on one who withholds grains in 11:26. The latter sentence suggests that the community has a role to play in retribution.[88] Other possible agents of consequences mentioned by Boström include the influences of agents such as one's companions (Prov 13:20; 18:24; 28:7; 29:3), God (21:1), as well as the psychological aspect of one's addiction to sin that breeds a self-destructive pattern of life (13:4; 21:26; 29:6).[89] As such, aphorisms in which "an action is inevitably followed by a reaction,"[90] such as 28:1, 28:10, 28:17, and 26:27, can allow for a variety of possible agents of consequences.

In summary, Boström's point on the agency of responsibility and the agency of the consequences serves to sever the inseparability and inflexibility of the Kochian act-consequence nexus. Due to the ambiguity of the agency of consequences, one cannot say that there is a strict causal connection between actions and consequences since there can be a number of intermediary agents acting in between to cause these consequences.

Along similar lines, another argument against the inseparability of the act-consequence nexus is offered by Elizabeth Huwiler. She notes that the act-consequence

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[87] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 116.

[88] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 120.

[89] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 121.

[90] Koch, "Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," 58.

nexus does not apply when one examines the nexus in specific details.[91] It is commonly asserted that there is an act-consequence nexus between wickedness and negative consequences. However, upon closer examination, Proverbial aphorisms appear to have a more fluid view of the relationships between wickedness and the specifics of their consequences. For example, Proverbs 13:25 asserts that the wicked will not enjoy material wealth. However, 13:22 suggests that the sinner may acquire wealth, even though his wealth is fleeting. Other passages indicate that the wicked might even prosper (28:12, 28). That actions are connected with multiple consequences, sometimes even contradictory consequences, suggests that no strict act-consequence nexus exists in Proverbs. In short, both Boström and Huwiler seek to undermine the Kochian act-consequence nexus by contending that actions/character qualities are connected to a complex range of consequences and agents who actualize those consequences.

YHWH as the Primary Agent

Third, the openness to different agents of retribution mitigates against a secular, non-theological reading of the "non-Yahwistic" sayings.[92] This openness provides an effective counter against a secular reading of these aphorisms. Before we examine the implication of this openness further, it is important to note that a key premise in Koch's thinking is the absence of any explicit mention of YHWH's involvement in the actualization of the negative consequences in the non-Yahwistic sayings.[93] The practice of distinguishing between Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic sayings based on the presence or absence of the divine name has been a staple among scholars who assume a diachronic

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[91] Elizabeth Faith Huwiler, "Control of Reality in Israelite Wisdom" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1988), 72–73.

[92] For lack of a better term, I refer to "non-Yahwistic" sayings as those without the explicit mention of God. I do not use this term to suggest that a secular worldview devoid of Yahwism lies behind these sayings.

[93] Koch, "Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," 58.

development of Israel's wisdom from secular to religious. Gese has already pointed out that such a distinction is not viable due to formal similarities.[94] That the Yahweh sayings are secondary additions to a secular layer is further disputed by Weeks. He notes that the Yahwistic sayings also exhibit a shift from the antithetical to the non-antithetical phrases following the same pattern of the non-Yahwistic aphorisms from Proverbs 10–14 to 16:1–22:16.[95] It is doubtful that the two types of sayings were inserted independently of one another. More likely, the Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic sayings were placed together when the collection was first composed. Hence, the Yahwistic sayings do not have a specific context as frequently supposed.[96] Rather they share the same contextual framework as the non-Yahwistic sayings and should be read as an intrinsic part of Proverbs.[97] This point receives further corroboration in T. Anthony Perry's paremiological studies of Proverbs. Using quadripartite models in his analysis, Perry demonstrates that Proverbial aphorisms promulgate relative, though not relativistic, values and judgments in relation to other sayings.[98] In this way, there is no need to assume that the sages intended each proverb to depict a comprehensive view of reality or of their value system.[99] In other words, the Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic aphorisms together describe a fuller reality of the sages' worldview and value system.

We have seen that the assertion that there lies an openness to the agency of consequences has the effect of relativizing the act-consequence relationship—that it is

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[94] Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 36–37.

[95] Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 64.

[96] Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 63.

[97] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 136.

[98] T. Anthony Perry, *Wisdom Literature and the Structure of Proverbs* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 103.

[99] That "every gnomic saying needs a balancing corrective" is an interpretive axiom advocated by Roland Murphy. See Crenshaw's discussion of the axiom in James L. Crenshaw, "Murphy's Axiom: Every Gnomic Sayings Needs a Balancing Corrective," in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in honor of Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm.*, ed. Kenneth G. Hoglund et al., JSOTSup 58 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 10.

not necessary to propose a strict causal connection between actions and their consequences. If indeed the Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic saying share the same context and are meant to be read together, then there is good reason to suppose, as Boström argues, that YHWH's active role in ensuring justice and retribution in the world constitutes "one facet" of the retribution process.[100] It is important, however, to note that YHWH's role is not restricted to retribution. His favor and displeasure are just as important in the perception of values in Proverbs.

As a further extension of Boström's arguments, when the aphorisms are read as intertexts of other sayings, a case can be made that the LORD is the primary agent of retribution.

Prov 19:17	He who lends to YHWH is he who is kind to the poor, and he [YHWH] will repay [Piel of שׁלם] him his deed.
Prov 22:9	The good of eye [generous?] will be blessed [Pual of ברך] for he gives from his bread to the poor [דל].
Prov 14:21	He who despises his neighbor is a sinner, but he who is kind to the lowly [read as עֲנָוִים] is his blessedness [אשרי].

Reading Proverbs 19:17 along with aphorisms that speak of the blessings of generosity (14:21; 22:9) suggests that YHWH could be taken as the primary agent of blessings to those who are generous to the poor.[101] Similarly, Proverbs 10:22 attributes the source of the blessings of riches without sorrows to YHWH.

Prov 10:22	The blessings of YHWH make rich, and he does not add toil with it.

It is reasonable to consider YHWH as the primary cause of the blessings not just of material wealth but also of material wealth accompanied by the quality of shalom as envisioned in wisdom (13:7; 23:4; 28:20). In short, it is possible to infer that YHWH is the primary agent of rewards, just as he is the primary agent of retribution in Proverbs.

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[100] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 117.

[101] Clifford, *Proverbs*, 197.

Furthermore, YHWH is actively involved in the satiation of the righteous and the deprivation of the wicked.

Prov 10:3	YHWH does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving [הוה] of the wicked.
Prov 21:25	The desire of the sluggard kills him for his hands refuse to work.
Prov 21:26	All day long he desires intensively [התאוה תאוה], but the righteous gives and does not hold back.

The cravings of the indolent are self-destructive. Due to his refusal to work (21:25), he is in a constant state of insatiability (21:26). Proverbs 10:3 nevertheless asserts that YHWH is somehow active in thwarting the cravings of such a person.[102] It is important to note here that personal responsibility is not necessarily opposed to divine activity. The aphorisms suggest that YHWH can be actively involved in retribution even when the sluggard is responsible for his own self-destruction (כי־מאנו ידיו לעשות).

The Concept of Order as a Worldview

Boström does not reject the notion of order wholesale. Rather, he is against the concept of order "regarded as an impersonal principle governing all things in the world" that "countenances a kind of deism in which justice and order are inherent in the structure of the world."[103] The book of Proverbs might not be as concerned with the cause and effect of every action and consequence to the minute details.[104] Boström does assent, however, that there is a sense of regularity, order, and justice that is established and upheld by YHWH in the worldview of the sages (an instrumentalist account of divine action). However, instead of order, he finds a more general term like "worldview" more

[102] Though the sluggard is not explicitly identified as the wicked, he nevertheless stands in contrast to the upright (15:19) and to the righteous (21:25–26). This suggests that indolence is not merely a character issue but also a moral problem.

[103] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 137.

[104] Stuart Weeks, *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 112.

amenable to the beliefs represented in Proverbial wisdom.[105] The key emphasis of a "worldview" is the notion of coherence over and against an "impersonal order." In the same vein, Fox rejects the Kochian concept of order and its attendant empiricism while maintaining that there is a sense of regularity and order in Proverbs. Going beyond Boström, however, Fox underscores a "coherent theory of truth" as Proverbs' base epistemology.[106] Boström's main contribution, then, is to shift the locus of interpretation from the concept of an impersonal order to the idea of agent causation:[107] behind every consequence is a responsible and free agent.

Chapter Summary

The turn to creation order was Gese's corrective against Zimmerli's eudemonistic reading of Proverbs.[108] This inadvertently created a divide between cosmological and anthropological focuses in the study of Proverbs.[109] Some scholars have followed von Rad's footsteps to propose a dialectic between cosmological and anthropological emphases.[110] They are perceptive to the difficulties of delineating wisdom thought into discrete and isolated categories. However, it is important to stress that agency and order (or, in Leo Perdue's terms, the anthropological and the cosmological) are not mutually exclusive in Proverbs. It is plausible to affirm both

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[105] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 121.

[106] Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 963–76.

[107] Philosophers distinguish between event-causation and agent-causation models of causality. The former speaks of an event's causing events, whereas the latter speaks of an agent's causing events. See Clarke, "Agent Causation and Event Causation," 19–48. See also Timothy O'Connor, "Libertarian Views: Dualist and Agent-Causal Theories," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 337–56.

[108] Leo Perdue rightly observes that "the stress on cosmology as central to wisdom theology provides an important corrective to reading the tradition through primarily a human lens." Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 46.

[109] For a discussion of cosmological and anthropological approaches, see Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 34–40.

[110] Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 41–48; Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 129.

agency and order when (1) the Creator God is seen as the primary agent to sustain his created order through his active intervention and (2) human agents are dependent creatures called to act in concurrence with divine purposes by maintaining the created order. In contrast to a Kochian marginalization of divine agency, the Proverbial worldview affirms active agencies of both divine and human agents. In the next chapter, I will argue for the coherency of a non-competitive view of divine and human agency in Proverbs.

CHAPTER 4

A COMPATIBILIST VIEW OF DIVINE AND HUMAN AGENCY

In the previous chapters, I have discussed at least two interrelated problems concerning divine and human agency in Proverbs. First, I have discussed the problem of construing divine and human agency in competitive terms. In general, I have noted the difficulties faced by scholars in accounting for the divine agency in a wisdom enterprise understood primarily as a derivative of human agency. Second, I have discussed the problem with a non-interventionist reading of divine agency in Proverbs and the attendant construal of retribution as an impersonal force. Thus, in the previous chapter, I have defended an agent-causation understanding of Proverbs' worldview compared to an event-causation understanding of the act-consequence nexus in creation order. However, there is still a need to address the issue that such a view appears to take on a dualistic view of divine actions.

In my judgment, the two issues above are interrelated and result from an inadequate view of divine transcendence in the book of Proverbs. In this chapter, I will argue for a compatibilist understanding of divine and human agency in Proverbs. I will begin by examining whether there is a "tension" between divine and human agency in Proverbs. Second, I will further examine the problem of a dualism of divine actions in Proverbs and the implication on its view of divine transcendence. Third, I will delineate divine transcendence and sovereignty in Proverbs and its attendant view of divine agency. Lastly, I will argue for a compatibilist understanding of divine and human agency in Proverbs in contrast to the two opposing alternatives of deism and occasionalism.

The Problem of "Tensions" in Divine and Human Agencies in Proverbs

As seen in chapter 2, it is a common assumption among the influential wisdom scholars surveyed that there is a *tension* between the human and divine in Proverbs. We have already discussed at length Lennart Boström's arguments against the concept of an impersonal order in Proverbs. Boström rightly emphasizes YHWH's active involvement in the affairs of human beings, which functions in tandem with human responsibility. Speaking of the tension between divine and human agency in Proverbs, Boström rightly notes that the "anthropocentric approach never collides with the theocentric." Boström reasons on theological and formal grounds. From a theological perspective, some proverbs affirm YHWH's sovereignty as working independently of human plans and activities in ways that maintain human freedom and responsibility. From the perspective of the formal characteristics of the Proverbial sayings, the collocations between Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic sayings suggest that the sages view both the theocentric approaches and the anthropocentric approaches in Proverbs as "complementary and not mutually exclusive."[1] Boström rightly opposes "a radicalized depiction of the tensions" between divine and human actions inherent within a Yahwistic reinterpretation of Proverbs.[2]

Boström's arguments for the complementary view of the theocentric and anthropocentric approaches are appealing and convincing. However, he perceives that certain passages like Proverbs 10:22; 16:1, 9, 33; and 21:30–31 indicate a less radical form of tension between the anthropocentric and theocentric approaches—"between what man accomplishes and what the LORD brings about"—in certain Proverbial sentences

[1] Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*, ConBOT (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 139, 140.

[2] Yahwistic reinterpretation proposes that the Yahwistic sayings in Proverbs were added later to correct the perspectives of the non-Yahwistic sayings. Boström, *God of the Sages*, 176.

when human activity moves in the "*opposite direction*" of God's purpose.[3] In other words, though Boström perceives divine and human agency as complementary, he maintains that some proverbs do indicate that human and divine activity are opposed to each other. I believe the nature of this alleged opposition between human and divine activity needs further examination and clarification.

Here, Boström's complementary treatment of the relationship between divine and human agency is perplexing and underscores the problem with the term "antithesis." First, Boström's distinction between more and less radical forms of tension between the divine and human is unhelpful. After all, a Yahwistic reinterpretation—which Boström rejects—stems from an assumption that divine initiative and human ability are distinct and opposed. While Boström rejects the views that the two agencies are irreconcilably distinct and opposed, he nevertheless affirms some opposition between the two. The questions that follow are thus: (1) What forms of opposition between the human and the divine are considered amenable to a compatibilist view? (2) In what ways are the two agencies opposed yet complementary to each other? Boström's approach neither resolves the apparent antithesis nor sufficiently accounts for the compatibility of divine and human agencies. Stating the complementarity of the two agencies in negative terms—that they are *not* mutually exclusive—is clearly inadequate.

Second, there is ambiguity in Boström's construal of an antithesis between divine and human agency. On the one hand, Boström agrees with Horst D. Preuss that Proverbs 16:33 does not indicate "an antithesis between man's actions and God's."[4] On the other hand, Boström notes that there is an "implied antithesis between the arbitrariness of the action and God's control of the situation to bring about his will." The latter assertion makes it difficult to understand what Boström means by his former

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[3] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 174 (italics mine).

[4] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 175.

assertion. Is there or is there not an antithesis between divine and human agency? If Boström perceives "tension" in terms of actions pulling in opposite directions, then the term "antithesis" might not be an appropriate one to describe the contrast between the arbitrariness of human actions and God's control.

The ambiguities of the antithesis between of human actions and God's control are due in part to the definition of antithesis and to the antithetical structures in the Hebrew Bible. Jože Krašovec notes that though the fundamental character of an antithesis refers to "two opposing elements" that "excludes each other in relation to a common idea," the term can also refer to a merism—the contraposition of opposite concepts to denote the same idea. An antithesis is broad enough to include the complementarity of contrasting ideas.[5] As Marvin Pope notes, "The antithesis is not in terms of contradiction, thesis, and antithesis, but in opposite aspects aspect of the same idea."[6] Hence, the interpretation of antithetical structures involves a complex relationship between contrastive ideas. More pertinent to our study is whether the contrast between YHWH and human beings necessarily involves an opposing tension between divine and human actions.

Lastly, as with Gerhard von Rad, Boström supposes that the cultivation of an attitude of openness toward the mystery of God's world serves as the explanation for the coexistence of the dual emphases on divine sovereignty and human ability.[7] The sages maintained an openness to mystery because their "optimistic quest for understanding" was always tampered by a deficiency of grasping the mysterious ways of a sovereign God. While it is plausible that the purpose of these passages in Proverbs is to teach an

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[5] Jože Krašovec, *Antithetic Structure in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, VTSup 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 5–7.

[6] Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AYB, vol. 15 (London: Yale University Press, 2008), li.

[7] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 177.

open attitude of inquiry, it is difficult to adjudicate the legitimacy of this reading. A more plausible reading is to take these passages as having the goal of forming fearers of YHWH (1:7; 3:5–6; 9:10).[8] In line with the theocentric thrust of the "fear of YHWH" passages, I will provide a theological basis for the compatibility of divine and human agency in Proverbs. But I must first examine whether there is a "tension" between divine and human agency in Proverbs.

Are There Tensions between Divine and Human Agency in Proverbs?

We begin with a working definition of "tension" between human and divine agency. Tension exists between divine and human agency in Proverbial saying when the potentiality ascribed to man to attain his desired result contradicts sayings that ascribe the same desired results to God. Boström notes the following passages as depicting a tension between divine and human actions by way of a contrast between divine intervention and human potential:[9]

Prov 10:22	The blessing of Yahweh, it makes rich. And toil adds not to it [blessing].[10]
Prov 16:1	To man belongs the plans of the heart, but from the LORD is the answer of the tongue.
Prov 16:9	Man devises his way, but Yahweh directs his steps.
Prov 16:33	The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole decision of it is from Yahweh.
Prov 21:30	There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against YHWH.

[8] See Christine Roy Yoder, "Forming 'Fearers of Yahweh': Repetition and Contradiction as Pedagogy in Proverbs," in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Ronald L. Troxel, Kelvin G. Friebel, and Dennis Robert Magary (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 167–83. As Zóltan Schwáb argues, the fear of YHWH can be both the source and goal of wisdom. See Zóltan Schwáb, "Is Fear of the Lord the Source of Wisdom or Vice Versa?," *VT* 63, no. 4 (2013): 652–62.

[9] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 173–177.

[10] Boström contends that עצב should be translated as "toil" instead of "sorrow."

Prov 21:31 The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but to Yahweh belongs the victory.

Boström perceives that tensions exist in these verses between human potential and the success attributed to divine intervention. The alleged tensions between the human and divine rest on the two assumptions: (1) that antithetical parallelism connotes a contradiction or opposition within the bicola sayings and (2) the priority of human potential in other sayings. In the following, I will argue that there is indeed a contrast between divine and human actions. However, the contrast is between the limitations of human action and the unlimited agency of YHWH. Wherever there is a contrast between divine and human agency, these actions are complementary rather than oppositional in terms of direction and purpose.

First, in the above sayings, except in 21:30, the second line is read as an antithetical contrast to the first line. The antithetical contrast between YHWH and human beings is fundamental to the Hebrew Bible. The antithesis is primarily in the form of "the verticality and radicality of YHWH" over the "horizontality" of human actions.[11] However, it is not self-evident that these verses should imply an oppositional contrast between divine and human actions.

In Proverbs 16:9, the verb יכין of the second line logically follows the verb יחשב of the first line. This suggests that YHWH's action of establishing (יכין) a man's step is an extension of the human's planning (יחשב) of his ways. There is no antithesis here, only a succession or extension of actions.[12] Typically, a man's ways are actualized in his steps (Job 31:4; 34:21; Jer 10:23). As such, the Proverbial passage depicts YHWH as the one who actualizes a man's steps.[13] Also, while there is no indicative verb in

[11] Krašovec, *Antithetic Structure in Hebrew Poetry*, 138.

[12] Duane A. Garrett and Jason S. DeRouchie, *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 344–45.

[13] Klaus Koch touches on this idea when he suggests that YHWH acts like a midwife to bring about the completion of what human actions started. Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament," 61. However, Koch means this in a way that YHWH's agency is limited to bringing human

Proverbs 16:1, there are successive connections between the heart (לב) and the organ of speech (לשון) on the one hand (cf. 16:21, 23; 17:20) and the activity of the heart (מערכי־לב) and speech (מענה) on the other (cf. 15:28). As such, both Proverbs 16:1 and 16:9 simply state that divine action actualizes human action. In making such an assertion, the two sayings imply a limitation of human agency, which Boström and others have rightly recognized. The limitation of human agency is further corroborated by Proverbs 20:24, which speaks of man's inability to comprehend his way. Nevertheless, it is plausible to read 16:1 and 16:9 as complementary treatments of human and divine actions.

Similarly, the casting of the lot in Proverbs 16:33 is actualized in its purpose by YHWH's decision. This is in line with the casting of the lot as a divinely sanctioned means for discerning divine decision (Lev 16:8, 9; Num 33:54). It is improbable that Proverbs 16:33 means to pit the human action of lot casting against divine determination. In the same vein, it is improbable to read YHWH's granting of victory as an antithesis of the preparation of horses for battle in Proverbs 21:31. The emphasis of this passage is that YHWH alone grants victory; he actualizes the purpose of battle preparations.[14]

To augment his arguments for an antithesis between divine and human actions, Boström argues that Proverbs 10:22 pits divine blessing over and against human potential. Accordingly, if עצב is taken to mean "sorrow" and the subject of לא־יוסף is YHWH, then this suggests that wealth is the cause of "psychological turmoil." However, according to Boström, the ascription of psychological turmoil to wealth is without any precedent in the book of Proverbs; hence, such a reading should be rejected. Here, Boström contends that עצב should be translated as "toil" instead of "sorrow."[15] He also

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actions into completion, whereas my point here is that there is continuity between human and divine actions.

[14] According to Sa'adia, "Sometimes God makes [horses] a cause of victory." Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18B (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 693.

[15] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 176.

translates עצב as the subject of לא־יוסף. Since 14:23 associates all עצב with profit, Boström's revised translation of 10:22 thus connotes a contrast between human potential and divine blessing: it is not human toil but divine blessing that adds to wealth.

One can raise two objections against Boström's translation and conclusion. First, while the change from a positive verb (תעשיר) to a negative verb (לא־יוסף) signifies a contrast in Proverbs 10:22b, the contrast between human potential and divine action is not necessary. As Michael Fox argues, an alternative interpretation is that there is a contrast between diligence and excessive striving.[16] The point of the proverb, then, is that wealth comes from divine blessing and excessive striving adds nothing to what that blessing has already accomplished. This interpretation is more plausible since יוסף suggests the addition—rather than the cause—of wealth. If this is correct, then 10:22 underscores divine blessing and human limitations, but it does not pit divine action against human efforts. Second, Boström's interpretation prioritizes the optimism of 14:23a in human striving over the pessimism in 10:22b. However, the contrast in 14:23 is between fruitful toil and fruitless talk (דבר־שפתים). The proverb does not indicate any limitation with human toil because that does not serve its rhetorical perspective.[17] Rather, the affirmation that human toil can be fruitful fits well with the warning against excessive toil in 10:22. Like the economic "law" of diminishing marginal return, 10:22 affirms that human toil is only productive to a certain extent.

As I have argued above, these passages do not imply an antithesis between divine and human actions; rather, they portray divine actions as the actualization of limited human actions. On the one hand, these passages affirm the legitimacy and limitations of human agency. On the other hand, they affirm that divine power is needed to overcome the limits of human agency. The passages are compatible with the notions of

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[16] Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 522–23.

[17] Cf. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 523.

divine supplementation of human agency—that God is "remedying the deficiencies of created causes" or "taking their place" when created agency is inoperative.[18] Divine and human actions are thus said to be in *concursus* with one another—where God's action is in some sense "running together with" [19] or "accompanying"[20] human actions. When there is a comparison of human and divine action, the emphasis is on the unlimited divine agency and the limited human agency. This can be said of the monocolon verse of 21:30 as well. The verse does not necessarily diminish the role of wisdom, counsel, and understanding but places these in their proper limitations before the purposes of the Creator God.

Similarly, it is unnecessary to read an antithetical tension between divine and human actions into Proverbs 19:21. The verse does not pit the purpose of YWHH (עצת יהוה) against the plentitudes of human plans (רבות מחשבות) in a way that dismisses the necessity and efficacy of human planning that is affirmed elsewhere (cf. 15:22; 21:5). The contrast between the singularity of עצת יהוה and the abundance of human מחשבות is aimed at underscoring the limitation of human agency and the efficacy of divine agency (cf. 16:3; 20:24). In short, I have argued that Proverbs depicts divine action in concursus with human action while underscoring the limitations of human agency and the extensive agency of God.

The notion of divine concursus finds further support when we consider instances when divine actions are opposed to human activities. While Proverbs does not explicitly set human and divine action in opposition to each other, divine action is commonly said to oppose the activities of the wicked. Hence Proverbs 22:12 states, "The

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[18] Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 100–1.

[19] Christopher J. Insole, *The Intolerable God: Kant's Theological Journey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 113.

[20] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, pt. 3 (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 102.

eyes of YHWH guard [נצרו] knowledge, but he subverts[21] [יסלף] the words of the treacherous." Here, YHWH's action does not actualize that of the wicked but acts in opposition to it. YHWH does not fulfill but thwarts the cravings of the wicked (10:3). YHWH does not maintain but tears down the house of the proud (15:25). In these cases, there is no correspondence between divine action and the actions of the wicked. Therefore, there is a tacit assumption in Proverbs that whenever divine action concurs with human actions and actualizes that which human agency is insufficient to accomplish (e.g., 10:22; 16:1, 9; 16:33), these human actions must occur in line with and not in opposition to the divine will and purposes.

We now return to the alleged tension between human and divine agency. There is a second assumption that drives this conclusion: the priority of human potential. Accordingly, there is said to be a tension between divine and human actions in a Proverbial aphorism when it is evaluated against other passages that speak of unbridled human potential. The implicit assumption here is that human ability is the starting point by which we should examine the relationship between divine and human agency. As we have seen in chapter 2, much of the reflections on divine and human agency begin with an anthropocentric focus on human freedom and ability. From this starting point, human and divine actions are inevitably perceived as in tension with each other. According to Immanuel Kant, freely acting human agents do not come under divine influences; otherwise, one loses one's sense of freedom.[22] Implicit in this view is the mutual

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[21] See Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15–31*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 213.

[22] For example, Kant writes, "It is not possible to think of a concurrence <*concursus*> of God with free actions. These are events <*eventus*> in the world. If God is their determinate cause, then they are not free. But God also does not concur; for then he would not be a solitary cause <*causa solitaria*>. If I say that God concurs with determination of our wills, then this would again be a miracle. If God concurs with morality, then the human being has no moral value, because it cannot be imputed to him." J. A. Eberhard and Immanuel Kant, *Preparation for Natural Theology: With Kant's Notes and the Danzig Rational Theology Transcripts*, trans. Courtney D Fugate and John Hymers, Kant's Sources in Translation (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 209. For an in-depth discussion of Kant's view, see Insole, *The Intolerable God*, 124–26.

exclusivity of human and divine agency. Therefore, if one operates from this assumption, then aphorisms that speak of human potentiality form the basis of one's understanding of aphorisms that speak of a contrast between divine and human actions, such as those listed above.

Hence, Boström's statement that the juxtaposition of the Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic sayings suggests that a complementary view of theocentricism and anthropocentricism runs contradictory to the assumption of the priority of human potential that he employed in reading the Yahwistic sayings. It is more consistent to approach the aphorisms mentioned above (e.g., 10:22; 16:1, 8, 33) with a complementary view of theocentricism and anthropocentricism instead of prioritizing the latter. The assumption of the priority of human ability does not serve a complementary relationship between the divine and the human.

In contrast to beginning with an anthropocentric point of view, when speaking about creation, Proverbs explicitly begins with God the Creator (3:19; 8:22). This understanding runs contrary to the modernistic starting point of human autonomy when contemplating the world.[23] It is no theological coincidence that we find in the book of Proverbs the brilliant mix of human casual ability on the one hand and divine transcendence and unlimited agency on the other. By anchoring our thoughts of human ability and freedom on a theology of divine transcendence and unlimited agency, we can reconcile the freedom of human agency with that of the divine.

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[23] According to J. B. Schneewind, the notion of self-governance rivals divine governance as the dominant way of thinking about morality, epistemology, and moral psychology in modernity. J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5–11.

Are Divine Actions Dualistic in the Book of Proverbs?

The dominant view of divine action in creation theology is a Kochian non-interventionist understanding of God's action as constantly sustaining and maintaining the created order—what scholars have termed "general divine action" (GDA). This view is contrasted with the notion of God's intervention into particular events in human life and history—what scholars have termed "special divine action" (SDA). The non-interventionist view of divine action is often spoken of as distinct from the interventionist account. We have already seen this dualism at work in John Coert Rylaarsdam's and Gerhard von Rad's approach. However, the clearest exposition of this dualistic view of divine action can be found in the works of Walter Brueggemann and Claus Westermann. Interestingly, following von Rad, Brueggemann and Westermann also advocate a dialectical approach to biblical theology.

Following Walther Zimmerli and von Rad, Brueggemann aims to anchor his anthropocentric view of wisdom in a non-interventionist account of divine action in creation. His non-interventionist reading of wisdom rests on four contradistinctions: (1) human experience versus the appeal to a higher authority (whether human or divine),[24] (2) divine retribution versus human responsibility,[25] (3) creation order versus divine intervention,[26] and (4) Paul-Augustine-Luther's pessimistic view of human nature versus

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[24] Brueggemann contends that wisdom's authoritative prescriptions for life are discerned only from common human experiences. There is no appeal to any human or divine authorities. The validity of wisdom's assertions rests on the truism of its observations and statements about life as it really is. Walter Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1972), 18.

[25] Rather than advocating a rigid retributive theology by connecting individual acts with consequences, Brueggemann avers that wisdom most fundamentally affirms a theology of human responsibility. The operative assumption of wisdom is that human beings can "choose wisely and decide responsibly." Wisdom's goal is to lay human destiny firmly in the hands of human agents rather that in God's. Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust*, 20–21.

[26] The creation order in which man finds his existence provides the context for living responsibly. This emphasis on order and stability in the created world, so central to wisdom, stands in contrast to Israel's historical narratives that speak frequently of God's "decisive intrusions" into historical processes. Wisdom depicts stability and order in life as God's will. Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust*, 23.

wisdom's exalted view of human nature.[27] Brueggemann contends that wisdom is not without a sense of transcendence—that the absence of divine intervention or divine authorization in wisdom does not necessarily mean that wisdom is purely secular or humanistic. He contends that the concept of divine transcendence in the OT is not exhausted by a divine interventionist model; rather, wisdom is founded on the transcendence of divine order. According to Brueggemann, in wisdom,

> transcendence is the affirmation that there is a given to the ordering of life which we cannot eliminate. Transcendence is the recognition that there is a mystery to life that is not confined to our ignorance, incompetence, or abdication. There is mystery in our best knowledge, in our greatest skill, and in our most passionate concern. The wisdom teachers and their followers did not care for a "God who acts," but they did know and affirm that life has an order and direction which is larger than human effort and which is not knowable to us. Faith means coming to terms with that direction and order for the sake of those entrusted to us.[28]

Here, Brueggemann echoes von Rad's setting of creation order as the locus of faith. With this, we can state the problem in this way: It is one thing to speak of a diversity of views of transcendence in the OT, but it is another to suggest that the concept of divine transcendence that arises from the creation theology of wisdom is so different from the transcendence of the God who acts that they are mutually exclusive. Yet, the language of those who wish to give place to a creation account of divine action that at least holds equal weight to God's historical and particular actions tends toward dichotomy.

Westermann also espouses a distinction between divine actions. In his exploration of the "Saving God" in history and the "Blessing God" in creation, Westermann asserts that "blessing is a working of God which is different from saving

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[27] Wisdom promotes an exalted view of humanity that stands in contrast to the Paul-Augustine-Luther tradition that emphasizes the corruption of humanity's ability to choose life. Following Zimmerli's cues, Brueggemann contends that such an exalted view of humanity is grounded in God's creation of man as "the trusted creature" and as the "enthroned creature." See my discussion of Zimmerli's views in chapter two. Though wisdom entails a self-awareness of human limitations, it nevertheless encompasses a high expectation of human ability to shape his own destiny and choose the good life. Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust*, 24.

[28] Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust*, 62.

insofar as it is not experienced as the latter in individual events or in a sequence of events."[29] A divine blessing is a continuous divine action through a gradual process in contrast to a divine saving, which occurs momentarily. Though Westermann emphasizes that the blessing God is also the saving God, he speaks, from a form-critical perspective, of the two divine actions as distinct but distributed proportionately and in a balanced manner in the OT.[30]

From our survey above, what is lacking is a way of speaking of divine agency in creation and divine agency in salvation history, whether in terms of GDA or SDA, as correlatives. As Patrick Miller notes in his discussion of creation and covenant, these two divine actions are often construed separately or seen in "serious and unhelpful tensions."[31] While there can be theological diversity within the OT (with different passages emphasizing different divine actions), the construal of divine actions in mutually exclusive terms contradicts the very assertion of divine transcendence. The transcendent character of God's nature makes it impossible to classify divine actions into neat and mutually exclusive categories. The book of Proverbs makes no such distinction between the general and special divine action of a transcendent God. The dichotomies between GDA and SDA on the one hand and divine and human agency on the other are not coincidental. These are rooted in an inadequate view of God's transcendence—a "diminished divine transcendence."[32] That is an ill-conceived notion of divine transcendence that puts strictures on the scope of divine agency. In contrast to such a view, Proverbs depicts a God who is "radically" transcendent and whose creative agency is unlimited.

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[29] Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 103.

[30] Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, 104.

[31] Patrick D. Miller, "Creation and Covenant," in *Biblical Theology: Problems and Perspectives: In Honor of J. Christiaan Beker*, ed. Johan Christiaan Beker et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 155.

[32] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 47.

YHWH's Transcendence and Sovereignty over Creation

There is already a recognition among scholars that the concept of God (*Gottesbild*) in Proverbs as the transcendent and sovereign Creator undergirds the concept of special divine action (divine intervention). Johannes Fichtner and Boström underscore YHWH as both the Creator and the sovereign regent of the world.[33] Fichtner speaks of divine transcendence as "self-evidently presumed" (*selbstverständlich vorausgesetzt*) since it serves as the basis for divine retribution and justice in Proverbs.[34] Divine transcendence is spoken of thus without the need to contrast God with any created beings. Boström speaks not only of divine retribution but also of his immanence and personal intervention into human affairs. Boström aims to contend against a deistic tendency in the Kochian order-thinking. He considers problematic the kind of order-thinking that "countenances a kind of deism in which justice and order are inherent in the structure of the world, rendering God's continued involvement redundant."[35] Boström contends for an interventionist view of divine transcendence in Proverbs that is coextensive with YHWH as the Creator of all. As such, my delineation of divine transcendence below will be relatively brief. I will, however, provide further support in areas where Boström's arguments seem lacking.

The relative paucity of God-sayings and creation motifs in Proverbs does not undermine the significance of the creation theology in Proverbs.[36] There is no reason to assume that the thought-world of Proverbial sentences is limited to explicit statements

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[33] Johannes Fichtner, *Die altorientalische Weisheit in ihrer israelitisch-jüdischen Ausprägung: Eine Studie zur Nationalisierung der Weisheit in Israel*, BZAW 62 (1933; repr., Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 105–17.

[34] Fichtner, *Die altorientalische Weisheit*, 105.

[35] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 137.

[36] See Boström's rejoinder to Crenshaw's objection to the significance of creation theology. Boström, *God of the Sages*, 85–87.

about God that and where the mention of God is absent, so is the concept of God.[37] The absence or presence of the divine name in a sentence does not fundamentally alter the worldview of the sentences.[38] That the creation theology in Proverbs 3:19–20 and 8:22–31 serves to justify or warrant the significance of wisdom does not make creation theology less significant but at least as, if not more, significant than wisdom.[39] The two passages tie wisdom to YHWH, the Creator. The abrupt shift of focus from wisdom's self-predication to YHWH in 3:19 and 8:22—both verses have YHWH in the initial position of the sentence—suggests the primacy of the Creator over wisdom. Also, that the existence of personified wisdom is owed to YHWH in 8:22–26 makes her a contingent entity that proceeds from YHWH. Scholarly efforts to identify personified wisdom, whether as a cipher or a reference to an ancient goddess, have been unsuccessful.[40] More likely, personified wisdom is a literary device used to refer to an abstract quality of God embodied in the wisdom sayings.[41] More importantly, apart from the difficult meaning of אמון in Proverbs 8:30, there is little to suggest that personified wisdom is acting as co-creator of creation. YHWH alone is the Creator of all beings. He is not just a supreme being, as though he is the highest among other beings. Westermann explains, "All being, like all that exists, is created; was God an *ens (being)*, even the highest, then he would be

[37] For a similar point, cf. Elizabeth Faith Huwiler, "Control of Reality in Israelite Wisdom," (PhD diss., Duke University, 1988), 69.

[38] Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 63.

[39] Contrary to Zimmerli's utilitarian reading. Walther Zimmerli, "Concerning the Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, Library of Biblical Studies (New York: Ktav, 1976), 185. Bernhard Lang's assertion that "wisdom, not the Creator and his work, is the central theme and focus of the poem" does not undermine my point here. YHWH's role as creator, though not a central theme in Prov 8, is nevertheless of utmost significance for wisdom's legitimation. Bernhard Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: A Hebrew Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim, 1986), 66. See also, Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, "Observations on the Creation Theology in Wisdom," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson, Issues in Religion and Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 43–44.

[40] See Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Bible and Literature (Decatur, GA: Almond, 1985), 23–68; Alice M. Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom* (2005; repr., London: Routledge, 2017), 10–52.

[41] Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom*, 18–22.

created, not Creator. Where being and existence are no longer identical with being created, God is no longer the Creator as the Bible understands this word."[42] As *the* Creator of everything, YHWH is the *wholly other*. As YHWH proclaims via the prophet Isaiah, "To whom will you liken me that I shall be the same?" (Isa 40:25).

While Proverbs 3 and 8 emphasize YHWH as the Creator of the world, in the sentence literature of Proverbs 10–29, the accent falls on YHWH as the Creator of humanity (Prov 14:31; 17:5; 22:2).[43] In these passages, divine transcendence is manifest in YHWH's total awareness of human affairs. Divine omniscience transcends space and time. "For before the eyes of YHWH are the ways of a man, and all his paths he is evaluating [מפלס]" (5:21). "In every place are the eyes of YHWH, keeping watch of the evil and the good" (15:3). The human heart is laid bare before YHWH's scrutinizing omniscience (15:11), and his assessment is more accurate than the self-evaluation of humans (16:2; 21:2). Divine omniscience, then, is the basis for divine retribution—God's righteous intervention into the affairs of the human world. That YHWH can perceive and evaluate the human heart ensures that he can and will recompense (השׁיב) each one according to his work (24:12).[44] Divine omniscience safeguards knowledge (דעת) by subverting (סלף) the words of the treacherous (22:12).[45]

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[42] Claus Westermann, "Creation and History in the Old Testament," in *The Gospel and Human Destiny*, ed. Vilmos Vajta, Gospel Encounters History Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1971), 22.

[43] Notably, Westermann suggests that the creation of the world and the creation of humankind are two different traditions behind the biblical creation account. The latter is the older tradition. Claus Westermann, "Das Reden von Schöpfer und Schöpfung im Alten Testament," in *Das Ferne und nahe Wort: Festschrift Leonhard Rost zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres am 30. November 1966 gewidmet*, ed. Leonhard Rost and Fritz Maass, BZAW 105 (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1967), 242–43. Regardless of his tentative proposal, the final form of Proverbs unifies YHWH as the creator of the world and of all creatures, with particular focus on human beings.

[44] Fichtner perceives a strong connection between divine omniscience and divine retribution in Prov 24:12. See Fichtner, *Die altorientalische Weisheit*, 116–17.

[45] See Waltke, *Proverbs 15–31*, 213. Contrary to Boström, Prov 22:12 speaks of more than divine involvement in ensuring justice; YHWH is active in preserving knowledge. Cf. Boström, *God of the Sages*, 146–47.

Furthermore, although divine transcendence is stated without any contrast to or comparison with human beings in individual passages, we can observe the differences between the limits of human agency and the boundlessness of divine agency by comparing different passages.[46] Humans can mistakenly evaluate their own paths (Prov 14:12) and their own hearts (16:2; 20:9; 21:2), but YHWH's knowledge of everything human is in-depth and precise (5:21; 15:3, 11). Human planning, while valid and necessary, is nevertheless subject to God's rule and determination (16:1, 9; 19:21; 20:24; 21:30, 31). Boström states it well: "The contrast between God and man is so profound that one may say that they belong to different worlds. Man exists within the limits of this world while the LORD does not appear to be bound by its limitations. God belongs to a reality separate from and unknown to man at the same time as he is actively involved in the world of men."[47]

Furthermore, that Proverbs appears to eschew anthropomorphic depictions of God, especially in the creation accounts, further underscores the sovereignty and transcendence of God.[48] YHWH transcends all creaturely categories. As Fichtner and Boström have pointed out, the sovereignty, transcendence, omnipotence, and omniscience of God are not unique to Israelite wisdom but are also present in Egyptian wisdom.[49] However, the monotheism of Yahwistic faith provides the basis for the radical

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[46] A point emphasized by Gese. See Hartmut Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit: Studien zu den Sprüchen Salomos und zu dem Buche Hiob* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958), 37–39.

[47] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 142.

[48] Fichtner, *Die altorientalische Weisheit*, 105. Cf. Boström, *God of the Sages*, 145, 154. While Proverbs appears to eschew anthropomorphisms, especially when one compares the creation accounts of Gen 1 and Prov 8:22–31, the book is not without anthropomorphism (e.g., Prov 2:6; 22:12).

[49] Boström, *God of the Sages*, 190–91; Fichtner, *Die altorientalische Weisheit*, 115–16.

transcendence of YHWH.[50] YHWH alone is the "wholly other" in the theology of Proverbs.[51] YHWH is the "wholly other" one, distinct from his creation.[52]

YHWH's Limitless Transcendence and Agency

Not only do the passages cited above underscore divine transcendence, but they also describe YHWH's immanent involvement in human affairs. It is precisely due to the YHWH's transcendence that He is able to be immanently involved in human lives.[53] Proverbs does not distinguish between transcendence and immanence but perceives both as integral to YHWH as the Creator. Divine transcendence and the Creator's agency in human affairs are inextricably tied. As a transcendent Creator, YHWH has the freedom and power to affect human beings. In this sense, his creative agency moves unhindered within human agents. In Proverbs, the divine creation of

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[50] In this respect, Hans Heinrich Schmid's contention that monotheism is not unique to Israel runs contrary to the conclusion of Egyptologists such as Jan Assmann. Schmid's equivocation of polytheism with the introduction of wisdom's hypostasis in a time when God appears distant from Israel stems from the ambiguity of the term "hypostasis" and his blurring of the lines between polytheism and monotheism. See Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit: eine Untersuchung zur altorientalischen und israelitischen Weisheitsliteratur* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966), 148, 154–55; Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). See also Franz-Josef Steiert's critique of Schmid's understanding of the "monotheistic elements" of Egyptian wisdom. Franz-Josef Steiert, *Die Weisheit Israels—ein Fremdkörper im Alten Testament? eine Untersuchung zum Buch der Sprüche auf dem Hintergrund der ägyptischen Weisheitslehren*, Freiburger theologische Studien 143 (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1990), 64–66.

[51] Henri Blocher speaks of "absolute monotheism" to bring out the notion of radical transcendence. Henri A. G. Blocher, "God and the Scripture Writers: The Question of Double Authorship," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 539.

[52] As Westermann notes, the differentiation between the one Creator and creation is fundamental to Israel's creation theology as well as her neighbor's: "Die Besonderheit besteht nicht darin, daß eine bestimmte Darstellungsweise der Schöpfung die allein biblische wäre, sondern einzig darin, daß der Schöpfer einer, alles andere aber Geschöpf ist." Westermann, "Schöpher und Shöpfung," 242.

[53] Boström makes the point, though somewhat confusingly, that though divine transcendence is not contradictory to immanence in that the latter stems from the former, God's nearness (immanence) and remoteness (transcendence) are to be seen as "distinct yet complementary." Boström, *God of the Sages*, 144, ix.

human faculties both undergirds the freedom of human agents and serves as the basis for the unhindered flow of divine agency within human agents.[54]

YHWH is the maker of the faculties of knowledge and learning: "The hearing ear [שמעת אזן] and the seeing eye [ועין ראה], YHWH is the maker of them both" (Prov 20:12). In Proverbs, both sight and hearing are faculties of knowing and learning as seen from their frequent juxtaposition with words of knowing and learning:[55]

Prov 1:5	Let the wise hear [ישמע] and increase learning.
Prov 4:1	Listen [שמעו], O sons, to a father's instruction and be attentive to gain understanding.
Prov 6:6	Go to the ant, O sluggard; look at [ראה] her ways and be wise [חכם].
Prov 7:7	I have seen [ארא] among the simple; I have perceived [אבינה] among the sons a young man who lacks sense.
Prov 15:32	He who ignores instruction is he who hates himself, but he who listens to reproof is he who acquires sense [לב].
Prov 24:32	Then I looked [ואחזה], and I paid attention [אשית לבי]; I looked [ראיתי], and I learned instruction [לקחתי מוסר].

While these verses do not necessarily assume an unlimited optimism concerning humankind's ability to become wise or prescribe empiricism as the basis of sapiential knowing, [56] Proverbs does associate the proper use of human faculties with sapiential formation. Consonant with the scholarly consensus, it is right to speak of human agents as efficacious in aligning their faculties toward wisdom.[57] In other words, humans *can* learn wisdom, but their innate moral equipment needs to be calibrated.[58] Nonetheless, it is

[54] As we will see below, YHWH's all-pervasive agency is not opposed to the causal efficacy of human agents.

[55] Cf. Yael Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture: Sensory Perception in the Hebrew Bible*, LHBOTS (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 158–59.

[56] See my discussion in chaps. 2 and 3.

[57] Avrahami, *Senses of Scripture*, 175.

[58] See Anne W. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 80–87.

important to emphasize that according to Proverbs' theology, the human senses pertaining to knowledge acquisition are owed to the divine Creator's agency.[59] If YHWH is the maker of the senses of perception, then it follows that "the ability to know is not an autonomous quality of man."[60] We shall explore the contingency of human ability in the next section.

In the same vein, the Creator's endowment of senses and faculties for human understanding, wisdom, and knowledge is also underscored by Sirach:

Sir 17:6	διαβούλιον καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ ὀφθαλμούς, ὦτα καὶ καρδίαν ἔδωκεν διανοεῖσθαι αὐτοῖς.	Discretion and tongues and eyes, ears and heart, he gives to them for thinking.[61]

The sensory faculties of speech (tongue), sight (eyes), hearing (ears), and thinking (heart) are divine gifts for thinking (ἔδωκεν διανοεῖσθαι αὐτοῖς).[62] Likely, διαβούλιον takes on a similar sense of the "inclination" or "free will" in Sirach 15:4.[63] As such, 17:6 states that the freedom to think is a divinely endowed human ability just as the human faculties of perception and speech are divinely endowed. As I have contended above, it is not neccesary to view divine creation and divine intervention in mutually exclusive terms.

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[59] As we have seen in chap. 2, this point is acknowledged by Zimmerli and others, but the accent is placed on human autonomy. The point here is different from Rylaarsdam's emphasis that wisdom is a universal gift rather than a "special gift of grace." John Coert Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 72. Rather, YHWH's universal endowment is the gift of human faculties designed for the purpose and potential of acquiring wisdom. See Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 98.

[60] Hermisson, "Creation Theology in Wisdom," 122. However, Hermisson thinks Prov 20:12 connotes the idea of predestination: "only those can hear and see to whom it is granted by Yahweh." I do not think that predestination is the only way to affirm the primacy of divine agency. For two common interpretations of the rhetorical function of Prov 20:12, see Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 176–77.

[61] Cf. Roger A. Bullard and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Sirach*, ed. Paul Clarke, Schuyler Brown, Louis Dorn, and Donald Slager, United Bible Societies Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2008), 339–40.

[62] Bullard and Hatton, *Handbook on Sirach*, 339–40.

[63] Bullard and Hatton, *Handbook on Sirach*, 308.

Proverbs simply underscores YHWH as the God who both creates and sustains human existence as well as influences and intervenes in human affairs.

Divine Agency and Human Senses in the OT

In the Old Testament, the divine ability to create human senses underscores the marked contrast between the limitless divine agency and the limitations of human agency. As Yael Avrahami points out, this contrast is exemplified by the inability of human beings to create the senses in idols.[64] The characterization of idols as the "work of human hands" (מעשה ידי אדם) accompanies the non-functional and non-sensory description of idols' sense organs in Deuteronomy 4:28, Psalm 115:4–7, and Psalm 135:15–17. "They have mouths but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; they have ears, but do not hear" (Ps 115:5–6). Psalm 115:2–8 highlights the contrast between God's freedom to do whatever he pleases and the inanimate idols—the works of human hands. The idols have merely the appearance of sense organs but are devoid of life and vitality. As Isaiah 44:9 declares, "All those who form idols are nothing, and their things of delight do not benefit." Specific to the relationship between senses and knowledge, Isaiah declares in the same verse that idols neither see (בל־יראו) nor know (בל־ידעו). In short, human beings cannot create the sense of knowing. The creation of human senses, particularly the sense of knowing, is solely a divine ability. From this perspective, the freedom of human agents to exercise their faculties is caused by the Creator's agency.

While the propositional assertion of the divine creation of the senses in Proverbs 20:12 is most explicit in the OT, similar ideas are present elsewhere.[65] The rhetorical question posed to Moses in Exodus 4:11 attributes the creation of speech,

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[64] Avrahami, *Senses of Scripture*, 190.

[65] For a more detailed discussion, see Avrahami, *Senses of Scripture*, 192–95.

hearing, and sight to God: "Who makes a mouth for mankind? Who makes[66] them mute or deaf, seeing[67] or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" Here a general statement about God's creation of senses for human beings (אדם) is applied to Moses in order to allay his fears. As Avrahami rightly states, the application of a general truth of the divine creation of senses to Moses's situation suggests that divine agency extends beyond the initial creation of senses to the control of the senses.[68]

The divine control of human senses pertains to both divine enablement and impairment. So in Deuteronomy 29:3 [Eng. 29:4], the gifting of a heart for understanding (לב לדעת), eyes for seeing (ועינים לראות), and ears for hearing (ואזנים לשמע) is a divine prerogative. YHWH has the ability to circumcise hearts (לבבך) so that Israel may love God with all of their hearts (לבבך; Deut 30:6). On the other hand, YHWH has the ability to impair the senses: "Make the heart of this people dull [literally "make fat the heart"], and their ears heavy, and their eyes blind; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understands with their heart" (Isa 6:9). Finally, though the theological significance of Exodus 7:3 is debated, the verse is clear that YHWH is able to harden (אקשה) Pharoah's heart in the sense of dulling its ability to be responsive toward the divine acts of signs and wonders.[69]

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[66] ישום may be translated as a permissive imperfect with implications on the question of theodicy. See T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, AOTC, vol. 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 77.

[67] Textual emendation has been suggested here since "seeing" (פקח) does not appear to fit the list of disabilities here. For more discussion on this issue, see Samuel T. Lachs, "Exodus 4 11: Evidence for an Emendation," *VT* 26, no. 2 (1976): 249–50.

[68] Cf. Avrahami, *Senses of Scripture*, 192.

[69] See John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC, vol. 3 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 87. For other biblical examples and a fuller discussion on divine control over human senses, see Avrahami, *Senses of Scripture*, 189–206.

Divine Agency and Human Senses in Proverbs

Proverbs is consistent with the OT depiction of YHWH's unlimited agency over the human senses. As the Creator of the senses, YHWH has control over the faculty of sight:

> Prov 29:13 The poor man and the oppressor meet together; YHWH is he who gives light [מאיר־עיני] to the eyes of both.

Most commentators agree that Proverbs 29:13 depicts the equality of the poor and the oppressed as God's creation, but the metaphorical phrase מאיר־עיני may connote more than just the endowment of life. The phrase מאיר־עיני is usually deciphered with reference to Proverbs 22:2 and Psalm 13:3.[70] When juxtaposed antithetically with the sleep of death in Psalm 13:4b, YHWH's giving light to the eyes means to be kept alive. Reading Proverbs 29:13b with 22:2b ("YHWH is the maker of them all") therefore suggests that the giving of light to one's eyes refers to YHWH's endowment of life to both the poor and the oppressed.

While not denying the significance of both the poor and the oppressed as created equal before God, the metaphor seems to connote the notion of continual sustenance and not just the idea of initial creation. When Jonathan ate the honey in the honeycomb, his eyes were brightened (ותראנה עיניו)—a contrast with the condition of being faint (עיף; 1 Sam 14:27–29). The honey sustained his life. Similarly, the concept of sustenance is clear from Psalm 19:9: "The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes [מאירת עינים]."[71] This reading comports with Psalm 13:3, which refers more to the sustenance of life than to the creation of life. In this way, Proverbs

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[70] Roland E. Murphy and Elizabeth Huwiler, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 12 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 142; Waltke, *Proverbs 15–31*, 441; Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 838–39.

[71] See also Dave Bland's interpretation of Prov 29:13. Dave Bland, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, College Press NIV Commentary: Old Testament Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002), 263.

29:13 speaks of the poor and oppressor as equal dependents on YHWH's life-sustaining activity.

Nevertheless, the metaphor of giving light to the eyes should not be reduced to either the sustenance or endowment of life. As we have seen above, unlike the idols of human making, human senses are divinely endowed so that human beings can experience the vitality of life. Hence, Proverbs 15:30 connects the light of the eyes (מאיר־עינים) with the rejoicing of the heart. Similarly, there is a parallel between a rejoicing heart (משמחי־לב) and the enlightening of eyes (מאירת עינים) in Psalm 19:9.[72] These parallels indicate that the giving of light to the eyes is not simply a matter of living but also the means of experiencing and enjoying life.[73] Therefore, Proverbs 29:13 considers YHWH as the source of the normal function of human sight, through which one can experience and enjoy life. Conversely, the darkening of one's eyes in Psalm 69:24 simply means the loss of sight. Hence, that both the poor and the oppressor can see and experience reality at all is owed to the continual sustaining activity of YHWH. As such, Proverbs 29:13 attributes human vision, which is associated with the vitality of life, to the sustaining activity of God. In other words, YHWH is the enabler of vision for both the poor and the oppressor.

Also, Proverbs affirms that YHWH has control over human speech:

> Prov 16:1 To man belongs the plans of the heart, but from the LORD is the answer of the tongue.

The sovereignty and control of God over human affairs in this verse are commonly acknowledged by biblical commentators. However, the problem of human and divine agency is particularly acute in this passage. As argued above, it is not necessarily to see divine action as contrary to human action here. YHWH's action here is perceived in

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[72] Cf. Avrahami, *Senses of Scripture*,164.

[73] Contrary to Fox, who argues that Prov 29:13 has essentially the same meaning with the concept of creation (as in "YHWH as the maker of both") in Prov 22:2. The phrase (מאיר־עיני) is chosen instead to avoid the suggestion that YHWH "creates certain persons to be oppressive." Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 839.

continuity with human action. However, there appears to be, as Fox observes, a "mysterious disjunction between thought and utterance" here.[74] Unlike the other passages dealt with above, Proverbs 16:1 appears to divide up the control of human senses between God and human beings. Syntactically, the juxtaposition of prepositional phrases (לאדם in the first stanza and ומיהוה in the second) in 16:1 is unique in the book of Proverbs. Moreover, לאדם is commonly translated as a possessive; hence, the RSV renders the verse thus: "The plans of the mind belong to man" (similar to the ESV, NASB, and NIV).[75] Thus, the use of לאדם and ומיהוה appears to emphasize the distinction between the human agency in thought and divine agency in human speech.

However, it is not necessary to read Proverbs 16:1 as a division of tasks between the human and the divine—that thinking is associated with the sphere of human activity while human speech is governed by the divine—that unwittingly relegates divine activity to a limited sphere (e.g., human speech). First, the close tie between the nouns לב and לשׁון—a metonymy of speech—renders a disjunction between cognition and speech unlikely. The two nouns can be legitimately construed as what Wilfred Watson terms correlative word pairs (cf. Prov 10:20; 17:20).[76] Further, as Michael Carasik points out, the combination of לב with verbs of speaking is a common biblical linguistic stock for revealing what is in one's mind/heart (e.g., Prov 15:28; 23:33; Eccl 1:16; 2:1).[77] In other words, biblical writers assume that speaking involves the engagement of the mind. It is a stretch to read the parallelism of Proverbs 16:1 as dichotomizing thought and speech.

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[74] Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 608. Similarly, Waltke maintains that the first stanza pertains to "human initiative in thought" and the second stanza pertains to "divine initiative in human speech." Waltke, *Proverbs 15–31*, 9.

[75] See also Waltke, *Proverbs 15–31*, 9.

[76] Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOTSup 26 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1986), 132.

[77] Michael Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel* (New York: Peter, 2006), 93–96; cf. Nicole L. Tilford, *Sensing World, Sensing Wisdom: The Cognitive Foundation of Biblical Metaphors*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 76–77.

Second, there is an ambiguity behind the use of the preposition ל with a noun that cannot be simply read as a possessive. Since the most common possessives in Hebrew are expressed by words in construct connections and pronominal suffixes, Ernst Jenni sees the "ל plus a noun" construction as having more than one nuance and not reducible to a "*Lamed* of Possessions." Instead, he prefers the generic nomenclature of a "*Lamed* of Ascription."[78] As such, it is debatable whether the "ל plus noun/suffix" construction connotes possession or gift (e.g., MT 1 Chr 6:48, 56).[79] The phrase לאדם מערכי לב simply ascribes planning to man without the need to infer that planning is the exclusive domain of human beings. Hence, it is not necessary to read Proverbs 16:1a as speaking of planning as exclusively attributed to human agency. If the gift of cognitive ability is in view, then the agency implied might also include the divine. Moreover, the use of the "*Lamed* of Ascription" with respect to cognition is not unique to Proverbs 16:1 (cf. Judg 5:16; Ps 119:99; Prov 30:2; Dan 10:1).[80] These passages state the possession of cognitive ability in a matter-of-fact fashion. Nothing precludes divine influence over human cognition (see the discussion of Prov 21:1 below).

Third, the prepositional phrase מיהוה is used in Proverbs 16:1 considers YHWH as the source of some entity.[81] As such, the prepositions לְ and מִן are not parallels that connote equivalent ideas of possessions or causes. The use of מיהוה in the second stanza heightens the first stanza and considers YHWH as the source of human speech and, by implication of the correlative word pairs, as the source of all the cognitive ability entailed in the forming of human speech. As such, the passage is an assertion of the immediacy of divine agency on human speech.

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[78] Ernest Jenni, *Die hebräischen Präpositionen. Band 3: Die Präpositionen Lamed* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 54.

[79] Jenni, *Die Präpositionen Lamed*, 72.

[80] Jenni, *Die Präpositionen Lamed*, 73.

[81] Source of favor (Prov 8:35; 12:2; 18:22), of decisions (6:33), of the gift of one's wife (19:14), of justice (29:26), and of direction (20:24).

In summary, Proverbs 16:1 depicts YHWH as efficacious in influencing human speech *while* acknowledging the legitimacy and limitations of human cognitive abilities. The implication of the above interpretation is that the verse does not suggest YHWH as merely the ultimate cause of human speech *only after* humans have exhausted their cognitive ability.[82] Such a view suggests that YHWH's agency is limited to the effects of human speech but does not bear on the human agency of thought and planning. Proverbs 21:1 (see the discussion below) clearly contradicts such a limited view of divine agency. Proverbs 16:1 simply states that YHWH has a direct effect on human agents to generate answering speech. YHWH's agency is immediate (i.e., direct) and pervasive. It is sufficient that the passage affirms YHWH as able to influence human speech as he desires since YHWH is rightly the Creator of all human beings.

Furthermore, Proverbs affirms the possibility of divine influence within human hearts:

> Prov 21:1 The heart of the king is a channel of water in the hands of YHWH; he [YHWH] turns it every way he [YHWH] desires.

In the book of Proverbs, while the human king is distinct from YHWH, he is regarded in a lofty position—almost on par with YHWH—and should be treated with reverence. Just as YHWH's eyes are in every place to keep watch over the evil and the good (15:3), the enthroned king winnows all evil with his eyes (20:8). Proverbs then exhorts one to fear YHWH and the king (24:21). Against the backdrop of an exalted view of the king, Proverbs 21:1 states that YHWH is able to direct the hearts of kings since the king's heart resides in the יד of YHWH. For Israel, the human heart is the seedbed of cognition.[83] Interestingly, the יד of YHWH occurs more than two hundred times in the OT. Most

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[82] Cf. Michael Fox, who seems to imply such a view when he states, "None of this means, however, that the utterance is entirely outside human influence or even that 'Human beings are totally dependent on [God]'. . . . People are ultimately dependent on God, but not totally." Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 607.

[83] Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind*, 8–9.

frequently, the phrase connotes divine power in creation and activity.[84] Nevertheless, in this verse, creative agency is not limited to the initial creation of the king's heart; it also extends to its daily activity. In the area of kinesiology, we have already noted that YHWH's agency extends to the steps (צעד) of man (16:9). In short, Proverbs depicts divine creative agency as unlimited and able to affect human senses, even those of a king.

Section Summary

If my exegetical arguments are valid thus far, then here are the theological and anthropological conclusions that we can draw from the book of Proverbs:

1. The Creator's agency

    a. YHWH is the transcendent and sovereign Creator. He is the singular cause of all created beings. He is the wholly other and exists independent of his creation. His radical difference from human creatures is portrayed in terms of his omniscience and his unlimited agency over all creatures.

    b. As we have argued in chapter 3, YHWH directly intervenes in human affairs for retribution and blessing. Proverbs does not appeal to an impersonal cause for retribution. The regularity and predictability of retribution and blessing in creation are owed to YHWH's interventive justice in the world.

    c. As the transcendent and sovereign Creator of human beings, YHWH endows humans with faculties so that they can act freely in the world, and YHWH affects human senses to align with divine will.

    d. Since YHWH is the Creator, his agency over human creatures is unlimited and can affect human agents according to his desires and purposes.

2. Creatures' agency

    a. As creatures, human beings are efficacious causal agents with their own powers and efficacy to genuinely affect changes in the world.[85] In the same vein, human beings are endowed with the faculties and abilities needed for human activities and the acquisition of wisdom.

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[84] Eduard Lohse, "Χείρ," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (1974; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 9:427.

[85] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 82.

b. As efficacious agents, human creatures are what Karl Barth terms "conditioned" beings[86]—limited in abilities and able to be affected by external causes (i.e., able to be disciplined or taught by others; Prov 15:32, 22:15).

Concurrentism: Beyond Deism and Occasionalism

From our summary above, we see that Proverbs affirms the unlimited agency of YHWH in the creation and the created efficacies of human agents. While some might be content with Roland Murphy's conclusion that the OT sages did not attempt to resolve the "conundrum" of how human beings are totally contingent on God and are simultaneously morally responsible agents,[87] there is still a need, in my judgment, to provide an account for the internal coherency of ideas in Proverbs that undergird the compatibility of divine and human agents. In this section, I will delineate how concurrentism is a better fit with the theology and anthropology of Proverbs than either deism or occasionalism.

On the one hand, for reasons discussed above, certain influential scholars have tended to prioritize creatures' agency over the Creator's agency. Divine agency is relegated to the margins in order to make room for human agency. It is unfortunate that biblical humanism has been explicated from deistic foundations. A tacit assumption of deistic belief is that created agency must operate "independently and to the exclusion of divine creative agency."[88] In our discussion above, we have underscored the deistic inclinations of modernist philosophy that results in at least two ramifications in the construal of divine and human agency in Proverbs. First, we have seen how divine and human agency has been viewed in competitive terms. Second, we have seen the deistic inclinations of the Kochian act-consequence nexus, which relegates divine agency to a supportive role of an impersonal created order. The net effect is the portrayal of divine

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[86] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/3:102.

[87] Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 169–70.

[88] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 89.

agency that is less radical than the Yahwistic sayings in Proverbs depict. My study above expands upon and supplements Lennart Boström's arguments for the centrality of divine agency in Proverbs. I have argued that divine agency is all-pervasive and immediate upon creatures' agencies in the book of Proverbs. The transcendent and sovereign Creator, the God of Proverbs, has a direct influence over his creatures to effect changes.

On the other hand, reactions against the deistic marginalization of divine agency can easily lead to a view called occasionalism.[89] Occasionalism asserts that God is the only real agent in the universe. Accordingly, God directly wills every event in the universe. All creaturely activity is "simply the occasion for God's own creative action in bringing to be what happens next. The creature becomes the empty shell [merely an occasion] for an exercise of divine power."[90] For example, if a man lifts his arms, it is said that God causes the man to lift his arms. While occasionalism emphasizes the primacy and sufficiency of divine agency, it nullifies the efficacy and power of created agency. The creature is not a genuine cause of effects in the created world.[91] Hence, occasionalism denies what scholars have commonly recognized and affirmed in the book of Proverbs: the efficacy of created agency.

To the best of my knowledge, I know of no OT scholars who explicitly espouse occasionalism as a theology of Proverbs. However, certain statements by some scholars may appear to lean toward such a view. For example, Murphy seems favorable toward occasionalism when he states that "the Lord is the primary cause of everything,

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[89] It is common for theologians to see occasionalism as a view that opposes deism—which is also called "conservationalism." See Petr Dvořák, "The Concurrentism of Thomas Aquinas: Divine Causation and Human Freedom," *Philosophia* 41, no. 3 (2013): 618; Insole, *The Intolerable God*, 119–20; Craig S. Bartholomew, *The God Who Acts in History: The Significance of Sinai* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 174–76.

[90] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 86.

[91] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 86. Alvin Plantinga perceives the stated view as "strong occasionalism" and rejects it. Instead, he opts for what he calls a "weak occasionalism" whereby the human agent wills and God actualizes the human will into action. See Alvin Plantinga, "Law, Cause, and Occasionalism," in *Reason and Faith: Themes from Richard Swinburne*, ed. Michael Bergmann and Jeffrey E. Brower (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 138–43.

both good and evil" as a reaction against Klaus Koch's mechanistic construal of creation order.[92] However, Murphy's statement might simply be a polemical rejoinder to Koch since Murphy affirms the responsibility of the human agents elsewhere, advocating a "both-and" approach to divine and human causality.[93] Nevertheless, Murphy's assertion begs the question of how making God the cause of evil squares with human responsibility. If God is the primary cause of evil and humans are secondary causes, then would this not make God the author of evil? Notably, an occasionalist can affirm human causality in a way that it is merely a proxy (i.e., void of creaturely power and efficacy) for divine action. This is not an easy question to resolve. The suggestion, however, that there is biblical evidence for God as the author of evil has been refuted by Fredrik Lindström.[94] Seen in this light, Murphy's oft-repeated dictum that "there is no effort in the bible to correlate human responsibility or freedom with the omnipresent causality of God" is unhelpful and could perpetuate further objections to divine causality.[95] On the contrary, however, a greater appreciation for the coherence and consistency of Proverbs' depiction of God and his relationship with creation could suggest a non-competitive or compatibilist view of divine and human agency.

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[92] Roland E. Murphy, "Hebrew Wisdom," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101, no. 1 (1981): 26 (italics mine). This statement goes further than what Murphy states in an earlier article (i.e., "the Lord is the primary cause of everything"). Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom—Theses and Hypotheses," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*, ed. John G. Gammie et al. (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 36.

[93] See James Crenshaw's evaluation of Murphy's axiom. James L Crenshaw, "Murphy's Axiom: Every Gnomic Saying Needs a Balancing Corrective," in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm.*, ed. Kenneth G. Hoglund et al., JSOTSup 58 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 10.

[94] See Fredrik Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament*, trans. Frederick H. Cryer, Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series 21 (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1983).

[95] Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom and Yahwism," in *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of John L McKenzie*, ed. James W. Flanagan and Anita W. Robinson (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 122.

The third option is concurrentism, which has been advocated by theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, Karl Barth, and—more recently—Kathryn Tanner.[96] While deism and occasionalism are polar opposite perspectives, they share a common dichotomy between divine and human agency. For the deist, human agency is genuine only when the divine recedes to non-interventionism. For the occasionalist, divine agency is genuine only when human agency is reduced to a mere proxy for divine agency. Concurrentism, however, holds that *both* divine *and* human agency are genuine and efficacious and that both cooperate together for the same effect. The psalmist states it in the negative form: "If YHWH does not build the house, its worker toil in vain; if YHWH does not watch over the city, the watcher guards in vain" (Ps 127:1). For the efforts of the worker and watcher to be efficacious, God must work; by inference, the worker and watcher must also work. Similarly, Isaiah 26:12 states that YHWH had "done [פעל] all of our works [מעשׂה] for us." All of the works of the people are accomplished by YHWH's doing. The apostle Paul enjoins the Philippians to "work out [lemma: κατεργάζομαι] your salvation with fear and trembling *because* [γάρ] it is God who works [lemma: ἐνεργέω] in you both to will and to work [lemma: ἐνεργέω] for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:12–13). Summarizing Thomas Aquinas's concurrentism, Petr Dvořák states,

> In the production of an effect, i.e., in actualizing some entity, both God and the secondary agent [created agent] are causally active . . . . God is active as the principal cause; the secondary agent produces the effect through God's power and thus plays the role of an instrumental cause . . . . The secondary agent is causally responsible for bringing about a certain specific determination of being, yet inasmuch as it produces being, it acts as an instrument of the primary cause, God. The resulting effect is thus a product of *dual agency*.[97]

The dual agencies of God and human creatures are necessary to produce an effect in creation. The same effect, however, is contributed to wholly, not partially, by both divine

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[96] See Thomas Aquinas, *On Creation*, trans. S. C. Seiner-Wright, Thomas Aquinas in Translation (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), arts. 7–12; Tanner, *God and Creation*; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/3:102–54.

[97] Dvořák, "Concurrentism of Aquinas," 623 (italics original).

and created agency, each according to its different ways.[98] Since created agency is determined by divine power to exist and to possess a specific nature of a being (i.e., fire produces heat, not cold; human beings are God's image-bearers), as a secondary cause, created agency actualizes an effect by virtue of divine power and exercises its agency according to its nature.[99]

The perennial question addressed here is how can divine and human agency contribute to the same effect without being in tension with or undermining each other. While various possibilities of how human agencies can act in the power of divine agency have been proposed,[100] as Tanner has eloquently articulated, the key to the compatibility of divine and human agency rests on a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence.[101]

A contrastive notion of divine transcendence simply sets divine agency in contrast to created agency as though the two are on the same ontological plane.[102] The concept of agency is univocally attributed to both God and creation. Accordingly, divine agency stands in contrast to human agency such that divine agency is merely something other than human agency within the "same universe of discourse."[103] As such, divine actions are perceived as actions of a being among other beings *within* the same created order.[104] From this perspective, discourses about divine agency portray God as "limited

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[98] Dvořák, "Concurrentism of Aquinas," 623.

[99] Dvořák, "Concurrentism of Aquinas," 622.

[100] Dvořák, "Concurrentism of Aquinas," 625–33.

[101] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine philosophical-theological debates about concurrentism. For objections raised against Tanner's work, see Thomas F. Tracy, "Divine Action, Created Causes, and Human Freedom," in *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations*, ed. Thomas F. Tracy (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 77–102. See also David B. Burrell's rejoinder. David B. Burrell, "Divine Action and Human Freedom in the Context of Creation," in Tracy, *The God Who Acts*, 103–9.

[102] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 39–40.

[103] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 42.

[104] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 45.

by what is opposed to it, that God is as finite as the non-divine beings which it is directly contrasted."[105]

On the other hand, a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence perceives God as "wholly other"—a being incomparable with all created entities—by virtue of God's being the source of all other entities. Since God is "wholly other," predicates used to describe creation cannot be univocally attributed to God.[106] If God is the source of all created entities and is radically different from all created beings, then it follows that divine agency cannot be conceived of in limited contrast to creaturely agency but must be unlimited in scope and immediacy over all created entities.[107]

Furthermore, if divine agency is differentiated from human agency as being on a totally different ontological plane, then a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence provides the possibility of speaking about the efficacy of created agencies (i.e., human agency). As created beings endowed with efficacious agency, human agents can act causally to effect changes in the created order. In contrast to occasionalism, there is no necessity to assume that the greatness of divine agency must result in the minimalization of created agency. The greatness of a cause does not logically entail the need to minimalize its effects.[108] The transcendence of God allows the Creator to maintain his greatness while creating human agents with causal efficacies.

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[105] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 46.

[106] Brian Howell has recently defended such a view in proposing a metaphorical approach to the language used to describe God. Accordingly, metaphorical languages are intentionally propositional and ambiguous in their description of God. See Brian C. Howell, *In the Eyes of God: A Metaphorical Approach to Biblical Anthropomorphic Language* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2014).

[107] The immediacy of divine agency stands in contrast to the assertion that divine agency is mediated through other creaturely means. Tanner objects to Plotinus's contrastive transcendence that renders God as merely the first cause of a chain of created causes. Tanner, *God and Creation*, 44. The unlimited scope and reach of divine agency based on divine transcendence has been argued for by Irenaeus against Gnosticism. See Richard A. Norris, *God and World in Early Christian Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), 84–86. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.13.

[108] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 87–88.

Against deism, there is no need to assume that efficacious created agency entails freedom from God. A non-contrastive view of divine transcendence allows a free human agency to be entirely dependent on divine agency since divine and human agencies function on different planes.[109] Moreover, the difficulties in detailing how human agency is causally efficacious and yet entirely dependent is not a defeater for concurrentism. That God is totally transcendent implies that there is an "a priori indeterminate complexity of possible mode of effect" on human creatures.[110] Hence, the God who is totally transcendent can act in an incalculable number of ways upon human creatures, even though he has made them causally efficacious. Notably, Immanuel Kant, as representive of modernist epistemology, rejects concurrentism due to a perceived antinomy between divine determination and the "causality of freely acting beings."[111] Divine influence and human freedom are incompatible because any external influence or motivation on human agents is perceived as undermining the freedom to exercise human agency.[112] Contrary to such an assertion, divine influence need not be considered as an "external" influence. There is no restriction placed on a totally transcendent divine Creator who formed human creatures into existence. Divine influence upon human agents can rightly be perceived as internal since human creatures are derived from the divine and there is nothing preventing God from working internally within human creatures.[113]

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[109] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 91.

[110] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 89.

[111] Immanuel Kant and Paul Guyer, *Notes and Fragments*, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant in Translation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 340. See Insole's discussion of Kant's rejection of concurrentism at Insole, *The Intolerable God*, 123–28.

[112] Insole, *The Intolerable God*, 150–52.

[113] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 95; Insole, *The Intolerable God*, 124.

Moreover, God can accomplish such influence without coercion or violence against human agents by means of a "loving persuasion."[114]

Also, in contrast to either occasionalism or deism, which assume that divine and human agency must be inversely proportional to each other (e.g., the magnification of divine agency must imply the minimalization of human agency, or vice versa), a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence renders all human agency toward perfection as directly proportional to the agency of God.[115] The more human beings move toward perfection according to divine will, the more we can speak of the efficacy of divine action upon human agents. All human accomplishments that conform to the divine will can be properly attributed to divine agency.

Moreover, that divine and human agency can function on different ontological planes and that humans are genuine causal agents provide the means for properly speaking about human agents in action without reference to divine causality, even though it is recognized that divine agency extends to humans without limitations. Each cause is sufficient for its effect.

In summary, a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence provides a basis for thinking coherently about the compatibility of divine and human agency. While there is a mystery behind the details of how divine and human agency can function together, a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence not only renders concurrentism possible but also gives it logical coherence. As such, divine and human agency can function compatibly on different ontological planes without pitting one against another.

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[114] Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 314. For an argument that persuasion is wisdom's primary way of discipline, see William P. Brown, "To Discipline without Destruction," in *The Child in the Bible*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge, Terrence E. Fretheim, and Beverly R. Gaventa (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 45–81.

[115] Tanner, *God and Creation*, 85.

Concurrentism in Proverbs

While Proverbs does not delineate a systematic rationale for concurrentism, it is no coincidence that we find the notions of divine transcendence and unlimited divine agency in colocation with an emphasis on human agency in the book of Proverbs. From the theology and worldview of Proverbs, a radical divine transcendence is the *raison d'être* of the compatibility of the Yahwistic and anthropocentric sayings. The coherency of this God-centered worldview stands in contrast to previous scholars' attempts to integrate the divine and human from an anthropocentric starting point (i.e., wisdom as a human enterprise distinct from revelation), attempts that tended toward a discordant relationship between divine and human agency. That the wisdom enterprise should begin with God is clear in the "fear of YHWH" passages (Prov 1:7; 9:10).[116] There is no reason to doubt the consistency of theological affirmations between what the final form of text affirms and what the authors/compilers of the text affirm by proposing an evolutionary process of theologization. The relatively few Yahwistic sayings in the book of Proverbs play no minor role in its theology and anthropology. As we have seen, these sayings depict a Creator God who is totally transcendent, differentiated from creation by his unlimited agency. It is the fear of this transcendent Creator God that is the beginning of wisdom.

First, the non-Yahwistic Proverbial sayings that focus on human actions are not anomalies in a God-centered worldview properly anchored in a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence. Sentences that apparently affirm the efficacy of human actions in the world and in gaining wisdom are coherent with a worldview that affirms the efficacies of both creative (divine) and created (human) agency. While the gnomic nature of Proverbial sentences does not require all aspects of the sages' worldview to be stated

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[116] As Bernd Schipper rightly puts it, "Human בינה cannot serve as the starting point for learning wisdom, but the fear of God can." Bernd U. Schipper, "When Wisdom Is Not Enough! The Discourse on Wisdom and Torah and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs," in *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of "Torah" in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Bernd U. Schipper and David Andrew Teeter, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 74.

in each sentence, our assertion that divine and human agency function on different ontological planes provides the means for understanding how the anthropocentric sayings of Proverbs can stand alone without the need to mention divine agency in the process. These anthropocentric sayings affirm the limited efficacies of human agency without denying the unlimited efficacy of divine agency. For example, on the one hand, several sayings suppose that humans can perform just acts (Prov 21:3, 7, 15; 29:4). These are stated without references to divine causality. Yet, on the other hand, several sayings speak of YHWH as the preserver and source of justice (2:8; 16:11; 29:4).

Second, on the basis of a non-contrastive view divine transcendence, we can understand how Proverbs can affirm both the efficacy of human agency and human beings' dependence on YHWH. The discordance between wisdom as rooted in human ability and wisdom as rooted in dependence on God has been regarded as the basis for taking Proverbs as being comprised of secular and theological wisdom. According to Bern Schipper, the final redaction of the book of Proverbs, consisting of Proverbs 1–9 and 30, reflects a shift from an optimistic anthropology in learning wisdom (i.e., Prov 10–22) to a pessimistic anthropology in need of dependence on God (3:5–6; 30:2–5).[117] In contrast to Schipper and others, it is important to state that the theology espoused by both Proverbs 1–9 and 10–22 depicting an unlimited transcendent Creator who creates efficacious human agents poses no difficulty in reconciling human ability with dependence on YHWH. That the human senses of perception are created and endowed by YHWH intimates that human ability is contingent on divine agency. As we have seen, the divine endowment of sensory abilities is what gives human creatures the vitality of life. Divine agency is needed for the proper functioning of human existence. Also, we have seen that there are no grounds for separating divine action into general divine action and special divine action in the book of Proverbs in ways that renders them mutually

[117] Schipper, "Wisdom Is Not Enough," 68–69.

exclusive. In Proverbs, YHWH is the Creator who endows human creatures with senses, and he is also able to influence human agents as he wishes. Hence, the exhortation to trust in YHWH (e.g., 3:5–6) accords with divine creation and the nature of human beings as creatures with limited created efficacies.

The recognition of human limitations in their cognitive abilities and causal powers does not mean that human agency is denied. Notably, in Proverbs, exhortations of dependence on God are most often contrasted with a reliance on human understanding (e.g., 3:5–6), and talks of divine agency are frequently accompanied by talks of human limitations (e.g., 16:1, 9, 33; 19:14; 21:31). However, the call for dependence on God and the recognition of human finitude do not necessarily lead to a denial of human agency. In Proverbs, only the transcendent God has unlimited agency over creation. As creatures, human agents have limited but genuine power to effect changes in the world (e.g., compare Prov 16:9 with 12:20 and 15:22).

Third, a non-contrastive view of transcendence undergirds Proverbial sentences that speak of divine concurrences with human actions. We have seen above that passages such as Proverbs 16:1, 9, 33; 19:14; 21:31 do not necessarily depict an opposition between divine and human actions. Rather, I have contended that in these passages, divine action *actualizes* human actions. A non-contrastive view of divine transcendence helps us see how both unlimited divine agency and limited human agency can function together to effect the same result (e.g., humans must prepare the horse for battle, but YHWH must grant victory; humans must cast the lot, but the decision is from YHWH; humans must think, but the answer of the tongue is from YHWH). More importantly, a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence does not require one to assume that there are certain aspects of human agency that are outside of divine influence *in order to* grant genuine power to that agency. As such, it is not necessary, both exegetically and theologically, to understand passages like Proverbs 16:1 or 16:9 as composed of two unrelated spheres of activities—one human and the other divine.

Lastly, inasmuch as human actions correspond with the divine will, human agency is directly proportionate to divine agency. In other words, the more human actions conform to the divine will, the more we can attribute to God his power to affect human agents. This assertion is a logical inference of the concursus of the the dual agencies. As we have seen, YHWH acts in line with human actions to actualize the effects that human actions alone cannot accomplish.[118] Yet, it is reasonable to infer that the effects that YHWH actualizes are consonant with and not counter to his will since not even the actions of the wicked are outside of his purposes (Prov 16:4).[119] Moreover, that Proverbs makes numerous assertions concerning the importance of the relationship between divine favor or displeasure and ethical behaviors makes the divine will the backdrop of what wisdom values or anathemizes.[120] Furthermore, the contrast between human limitations and divine power to actualize human actions is also an important consideration. While the human potential for learning wisdom is affirmed in Proverbs, there is no linear optimism between individual agency and sapiential formation.[121] It is reasonable, then, to infer that the greater the degree to which human agency conforms to divine pleasure, the greater one can attribute the cause to divine agency. For example, while Proverbs 16:1 might be ambivalent about what kinds of answers of the tongue are attributed to divine agency, it is reasonable to suggest that the more one's answer adheres to divine pleasure—such as a gentle answer in the face of wrath (15:1), a fitting answer (26:4–5), and an answer from

[118] See the discussion in the sect. "Are There Tensions between Divine and Human Agency in Proverbs?" above.

[119] Our concurrentism prevents this assertion from considering God as the cause of evil.

[120] Prov 3:32; 6:16; 11:1; 12:2, 22; 15:26, 29; 16:5, 7; 17:15; 20:10, 23.

[121] As Stewart rightly states, "Proverbs implies that moral equipment is innate, but exists in potential only." Moral formation requires means internal and external to oneself. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 98.

the contemplations of the righteous (15:28)—the more recognizable it is that the "answer of one's tongue is from YHWH."[122]

The point that human agency is directly proportional to divine agency is further evidenced by the observation that the efficacy of human actions (i.e., success) is positively related to piety toward YHWH: "Commit your work to YHWH, and your plans will be established" (Prov 16:3); "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov 3:6); "Honor YHWH with your wealth and from the first of all your produce, then your storehouses will be filled with sufficiently, and your vats will burst forth with wine" (Prov 3:9). In these passages, the efficacy of human actions (i.e., the straightness of one's path, the establishment of one's plans, and the filling of one's storehouses) is attributed to one's piety. Such piety not only places the accent on the need for human dependence on God but also indicates that human efficacies can be directly attributed to God.

The implication of this proportionality of divine and human agency is that contrary to scholars who perceive human agency as defining the wisdom enterprise, the efficacy of human agency in Proverbs according to the divine will be rightly considered as the manifested efficacy of divine agency. That is, based on Proverbs' theology of creation, talks of human potentiality are inseparable from talks about God's agency.[123]

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have argued for the concurrence of divine and human agency in Proverbs. As I have contended, the compatibility between divine and human agency in

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[122] Here, the underlying assumption is that the wisdom values are consonant with divine pleasure. It is evident that the wisdom embodied in Proverbs claims to promulgate values that are in accord with divine pleasure and to anathemize values that are abominable to YHWH. I find no textual evidence to the contrary.

[123] For more discussions, see Ulrich Luz, "Why Do Theologians Speak about God When They Speak about Humans?," in *Theologies of Creation in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity: In Honor of Hans Klein*, ed. Tobias Niklas and Korinna Zamfir, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 6 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 1–16.

Proverbs does not suggest a dialectical balance between divine and human initiatives.[124] The compatibility between divine and human agency in Proverbs is properly grounded in Proverbs' own theology of the transcendent God who acts as both Creator and intervener in human affairs. As such, the compatibility of divine and human agencies in no way suggests that they are operating on the same ontological plane. Rather, compatibility is grounded on the unlimited agency of the transcendent (understood non-contrastively) Creator who endows human creatures with powers and efficacy for genuine actions in the world. This transcendent Creator God has the power to accompany humanity in their divinely endowed ability to arrive at the same effects. The affirmations of genuine human agency and the immediacy of divine agency on human agents intimates that human agency vis-à-vis conformity to the divine will is directly proportional to divine agency. If indeed wisdom's values conform to the divine will, then efficacious human actions that fall in line with wisdom's values are properly regarded as a function of one's dependence on YHWH (e.g., Prov 3:5–6). In short, whenever sapiential formation is achievable by human agents, it is legitimate to infer from Proverbs' creation theology that the efficacy of sapiential formation must be derived primarily from divine agency and secondarily from human activity.

[124] Contra to von Rad. See chap. 2.

CHAPTER 5

THE DEUTERONOMIC TORAH AS DIVINE DISCOURSE

In the last chapter, I have argued that a compatibilist understanding of divine and human agency based on a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence better accounts for Proverbs' theocentrism and anthropocentrism. A non-contrastive idea of divine transcendence provides coherence to the concurrentism between divine and human agency in Proverbs. Even if my arguments are correct that concurrentism represents the worldview of Proverbs, then there remains the question of whether the final form of Proverbs is intended to be read as a divine discourse, meaning that divine agency is operative within the text of Proverbs for the sapiential formation of its readers. Answering this question entails an inquiry into the nature of the divine discourse, if there is one, in the book of Proverbs.

It has been noted that most scholars observe the absence or the lack of divine revelation in the concept of wisdom in Proverbs. Notably, divine revelation is commonly understood as a prophetic revelation in which YHWH speaks to a mediator and then the mediator relays the divine speech. Since Proverbs does not explicitly derive wisdom from prophetic revelations, scholars hold that Proverbial wisdom has human rather than divine origins. I will deal with wisdom as divine discourse in chapter 6. In this chapter, I will examine the book of Deuteronomy to understand how the Mosaic Torah is taken as divine discourse. As noted in chapter 1, due to the ambiguity of the meaning of revelation and inspiration, we need a biblical paradigm to understand the nature of divine speech. It is my contention that the Deuteronomic Torah provides a paradigm for understanding the

dual agencies of divine discourse.[1] I will first delineate a theology of divine communication in Deuteronomy. This entails an examination of how Deuteronomy portrays the formation of the Torah book as divine discourse through various forms of dual-agency discourse. Thereafter, I will delineate and employ Nicholas Wolterstorff's concept of divine discourse in dialogue with Deuteronomy's theology of communication to demonstrate how human discourse can be counted as divine discourse.

Deuteronomy's Theology of Communication

Since J. Wellhausen, the theme of the centralization of Israel's worship concerning Josiah's reform has dominated scholars' reading of the book of Deuteronomy.[2] More recently, Dennis Olson has underscored the motif of the death of Moses and its significance to the theology of Deuteronomy.[3] More significant to our purpose, Jean-Pierre Sonnet has argued, along the same lines as the recurring motif of Moses's death, that a theology of communication is central to Deuteronomy's concerns.[4] Deuteronomy's primary concern is the continual promulgation and preservation of YHWH's words through Moses's words in a written medium (ספר). The problem Deuteronomy aims to overcome is not so much the problem of decentralized worship but

[1] The paradigmatic significance of Mosaic revelation is the subject of investigation in George J. Brooke, Hindy Najman and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, eds., *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions, vol. 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2008). Eva Mroczek's chapter ("Moses, David and Scribal Revelation: Preservation and Renewal in Second Temple Jewish Textual Traditions," 91–116) explores the Mosaic and David paradigms for scribal revelations.

[2] Accordingly, Wellhausen popularized the idea that the main purpose of Deuteronomy was to "centralize" the worship of YHWH in the temple in Jerusalem. See Douglas A. Knight, "Wellhausen and the Interpretation of Israel's Literature," *Semeia* 25 (1982): 26. For a helpful critique and corrective to Deuteronomy's concern for centralization, see also J. G. McConville and J. G. Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, JSOTSup 179 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 89–139. See also Duane Garrett's discussion of centralization theory in the context of the problem of the Levitical priesthood in the Hebrew Bible. Duane A. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2000), 219–31. For the most recent treatment of the problems with the Wellhausanian documentary hypothesis, see Leslie S. Baker et al., eds., *Exploring the Composition of the Pentateuch*, BBRSup 27 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020).

[3] See especially Dennis T. Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 7–22.

[4] I will explicate on Sonnet's arguments below.

the preservation of YHWH's mediated words after the death of his faithful servant and prophet *par excellence*, Moses (Deut 34:10–12). Key to Sonnet's approach is a narrative reading of the final form of Deuteronomy in contrast to approaches that read Deuteronomy through a reconstruction of Israel's history based on Josiah's reform.[5] In Sonnet's view, Deuteronomy's theology of communication emerges from its preference for "showing" instead of "telling." That is, Deuteronomy aims to show how Moses's words are taken as the voice of YHWH.

The necessity of the continuation of mediated divine communication in Deuteronomy emerges from a narrative tension between the essentiality of Mosaic speech to mediate YHWH's voice on the one hand and the reality of the death of Moses on the other. That Deuteronomy opens with the introductory heading "These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan . . ." (1:1) signals the centrality of Mosaic speech in Deuteronomy's discourse. We see right at the beginning Deuteronomy's emphasis of attributing Moses's speech to divine authorization: "Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment to them" (1:3). In the narrative frame of Deuteronomy 1:6–4:43, readers encounter Moses's retelling of history. In Moses's recounting of the past, the attribution of Israel's failure (1:43–46) as well as their successes (2:31–37) to their responses to Moses's mediating speech underscores the central importance of paying heed to Moses's voice for their future (in Deuteronomy's time frame) occupation of the promised land (4:1). However, we encounter the LORD's prohibiting Moses from entering the promised land in Deuteronomy 3:23–26, which receives further clarification in 4:22 that Moses's non-entry into the land would be due to his death outside of the land. As such, Moses's death becomes fused with the reality of Israel's dwelling in the land of Moab "beyond the

[5] For an overview of how the narrative approach differs from historical-critical approaches, see J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, AOTC (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2002), 33–38.

Jordan" (Cisjordan) and marks Israel's future across the Jordan (Transjordan) without the presence of Moses. It is the dynamic between the centrality of Moses's mediating voice in Israel's future and Moses's death and absence in Israel's future that raises the question of how Israel can continually listen to Moses's mediating speech in his absence.[6] This question then drives Deuteronomy's need for a written communication, which eventually culminates in the ending narrative frame (Deut 31–34) that states, "When Moses had finished the words of this Torah in a book to the very end . . ." (31:24). The completed book of the Torah then exerts an illocutionary force of witnessing against Israel beyond Moses's death: "Take this Book of the Torah and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you. For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today, while I am alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my death!" (31:26–27). In Deuteronomy's conception, Moses's unique prophetic voice is succeeded by no specific individuals other than the written Torah.[7] Any true prophet in Israel's future would be merely a "prophet like Moses" (18:15). In Deuteronomy's conclusion, Joshua succeeds Moses's leadership role as one "full of the spirit of wisdom" (34:9) *because* Moses had laid his hands on him (כי־סמך משה את־ידיו עליו). The people's compliance to Joshua is construed as obedience to that which the LORD had commanded Moses (34:9b).

[6] Cf. Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *The Book within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy*, BibInt 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 32–35.

[7] Joshua's succession of Moses is for the specific purpose of occupation of the land (e.g., Deut 3:28; 31:3, 23; 34:10–12). See also J. G. McConville, *God and Earthly Power: An Old Testament Political Theology, Genesis-Kings*, LHBOTS 454 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 96.

The Divine Voice and Mosaic Speech in Deuteronomy

The divine authorization of Moses's mediating speech is central to Moses's retelling of the Sinaitic revelation in Deuteronomy 5:23–31.[8] There, YHWH agrees to the people's request for Moses to "go near and hear all that the LORD our God will say [יאמר], and speak [תדבר] to us all that the LORD our God will speak [ידבר] to you, and we will hear and do it" (Deut 5:27). In Moses's retelling of the event of Exodus 20:18–19,[9] it is interesting to note the people's fearful request in 20:19: "Speak [דבר], you to us, and we will listen, but do not let God speak [ידבר] with us lest we die." Here, the accent is simply on Moses's mediating role without details of how Moses should speak to them. They simply wanted Moses to speak in YHWH's stead. However, according to Moses's recount of the event in Deuteronomy 5:27, the people's request is made explicit. Here, Moses reveals that the people wanted a verbatim transmission of YHWH's words; Moses should hear all that the LORD will say and speak to them all that the LORD will speak to him. The repetition of כל־אשר יאמר יהוה and כל־אשר ידבר יהוה in Deuteronomy 5:27 as the respective objects of Moses's hearing and speaking corroborates this understanding of the people's request.

In contrast to the people's request, Moses's retelling of YHWH's response to their request in Deuteronomy 5:31 underscores the centrality of his teaching: YHWH will speak (אדברה) to Moses all of the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments (כל־המצוה והחקים) that Moses shall teach (תלמדם) to the people (cf. 4:14). YHWH's command that Moses shall teach rather than speak all that he has heard opens up the possibility of Mosaic agency in the teaching of YHWH's words instead of a verbatim

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[8] Cf. Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 36–38.

[9] Scholars typically recognize Deut 5:23–31 as parallel to Exod 20:18–21. See S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 87; Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, WBC, vol. 6A, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 134; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 5 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 241–42.

transmission. As Sonnet has noted, "Teaching (למד, Piel) is a modality of communication never linked with God in Deuteronomy. It applies, on the contrary, to Moses's act of communication."[10]

The body of instructions that Israel would hear on the planes of Moab for their future obedience is the commandment (המצוה) consisting of the statutes and rules (החקים והמשפטים) that YHWH has commanded Moses to teach (למד) them (Deut 6:1; cf. 4:1, 5, 10, 14). To be sure, Moses's teaching entails more than the transfer of information. Teaching in Deuteronomy also exerts an illocutionary force of a command (מצוה): "This is the commandment [המצוה]—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me *to teach you* . . . , by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which *I commanded* you" (6:1–2; italics mine). Thus, Deuteronomy's depiction of Mosaic teaching is consonant with the notion of Moses's exclusive role as the mediator of divine revelation. Israel and the readers of Deuteronomy have no access to the divine revelation at Sinai except through the teaching of Moses.

The emphasis on Moses's teaching is also consonant with Deuteronomy's communicative goal of a written Torah. First, scholars have noted that תורה is etymologically related to הורה, the *Hiphil* form of ירה.[11] In Deuteronomy, though the *Hilphil* form of ירה is used exclusively for the teaching of the Levites (Deut 17:10, 11; 24:8; 33:10), it is clear that the Levitical teachings are connected to the Mosaic Torah. The תורה is stated twice as the content of the Levitical teachings in the land (17:11; 33:10). The Levitical priests are to teach the written Torah that Moses had entrusted (31:9) and assigned to them as guardians of the ספר התורה הזה (31:26).[12] Hence, as a

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[10] See Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 37.

[11] For a survey of scholars' views on the meaning of תורה, see Gunnar Östborn and Cedric Hentschel, *Tōrā in the Old Testament: A Semantic Study* (Lund, Sweden: Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1945), 4–22.

[12] The responsibility of the priests to teach the Torah is assumed in passages such as Hos 4:6; Mic 3:11; Mal 2:1–9.

depository of Mosaic teachings, the Torah is meant to be read and taught chiefly by the Levitical priests to the people who also hold the responsibility of teaching (למד) it to the next generation (6:7; 11:19). It is Deuteronomy's goal to promulgate the voice of YHWH, which is heard only through the Mosaic Torah.

Second, the Mosaic Torah consists of not only legal material but also the paraenetic speeches of Moses. Georg Braulik has argued that words associated with the Torah—such as דבר (4:2; 13:1; 30:14), דברים (1:18; 6:6; 11:18), חקים (4:6, 40; 6:17; 26:17; 27:10), מצוה (5:31; 6:1, 25; 7:11; 8:1; 11:8, 22; 15:5; 30:11)—refer to the whole "law" promulgated by Moses, which includes both the paraenetic portion (Deut 5–11; 27–28) and the body of legal material (Deut 12–26).[13] More convincing is Sonnet's argument that the content of the Mosaic Torah lies somewhere between the narrator's announcement in 4:44 ("This is the Torah that Moses set before the people of Israel") and the resumption of the narrator's voice that declares the completion of Moses's writing in 31:9 ("Then Moses wrote this Torah . . .").[14] By combining Moses's paraenesis and the body of legal material, the Mosaic Torah aims to promulgate not just the laws for obedience but also Moses's teachings *about* these laws.[15]

Within Deuteronomy, then, there appears to be a distinction between revelation as mediated through Moses's teaching and the unmediated revelation of the divine voice. Braulik has noted that such a distinction can be distilled from the *Promulgationssatz* (promulgation sentence), which always uses the *Piel* of צוה.[16] The present tense and participial forms of צוה that are often connected with the time-marker היום are used to refer to the promulgation of Mosaic Torah in the land of Moab. On the other hand, the

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[13] See Georg Braulik, "Die Ausdrücke für Gesetz im Buch Deuteronomium," *Biblica* 51, no. 1 (1970): 45–66.

[14] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 248.

[15] See also, Ian Cairns, *Word and Presence: A Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 246–47.

[16] Braulik, "Die Ausdrücke für Gesetz im Buch Deuteronomium," 41–42.

perfect form of צוה is used to refer back to YHWH's revelation at Horeb. In this case, when YHWH is the subject, the *Promulgationssatz* always refers to either the Decalogue or YHWH's command for Moses to teach. From the perspective of Deuteronomy's theology of communication, we can say that there is a distinction between the promulgation of the Decalogue and the promulgation of the divine words through Moses's teachings. The two categories overlap but are fundamentally different.

On the one hand, the Decalogue was spoken to Israel without Moses's mediation. Moses recounts the revelation of the Decalogue by a direct quotation of YHWH's words: "The LORD spoke with you face to face . . . , saying" (Deut 5:4–5). God spoke directly to Israel while Moses stood between Israel and God at Horeb (5:5). The Mosaic Torah, on the other hand, is a thoroughly mediated form of divine communication. As a mediated form of divine communication, the words (דברים) that Moses speaks take center stage (1:1; 6:6; 31:1; 32:45) and highlight the importance of Mosaic agency.[17] Sonnet states it well: Through teaching, Moses "liberally conveys and enforces what God has revealed to him . . . . Far from constituting an alternative revelation, the legal corpus in Deuteronomy represents a didactic reformulation of God's legal communication at Sinai/Horeb."[18] We shall explore the nature of and relationship between these two forms of communication below.

The Mimesis of Divine Writing in Deuteronomy

Joachim Schaper sums up Deuteronomy's theology of communication this way: "God writes. Moses writes. The Israelites write."[19] The apparent relationship

[17] Michael Fishbane notes that "in the Book of Deuteronomy the entire corpus [of law] is presented as a recapitulation by Moses of 'all that which YHWH commanded him' (Deut. 1: 1) at Sinai (v. 6)." Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 163.

[18] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 47–48.

[19] Joachim Schaper, "Theology of Writing: The Oral and the Written, God as Scribe, and the Book of Deuteronomy," in *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach*, ed. Louise Joy. Lawrence and Mario I. Aguilar (Leiden: Deo, 2004), 97.

between divine writing, Moses's writing, and the Israelites' writing of the sacred words in Deuteronomy has been more thoroughly explored and explicated by Sonnet's work. In this section, with Sonnet as my guide, I will delineate how the writing of the Torah is a mimesis of divine writing.

In Schaper's summary, this sequence of writing corresponds to the past, present, future of Deuteronomy's perspective of time, which is essential to its theology.[20] However, the sequence in Deuteronomy's writing places the account of Moses's writing last. It is important to note that of the twenty-two occurrences of the verb כתב in Deuteronomy, the first mentions of writing were attributed to YHWH's writing of the Decalogue on the tablets at Horeb (4:13; 5:22). The next mentions of writing refer to Israel's writing of the words commanded by Moses in the future—"in the land" that they are crossing over (6:1, 9). These are followed by another cycle of God's writing the Decalogue and then by the command for Israel to write Moses's words (9:10; 10:2, 4; 11:20). The second cycle is needed apparently because of the destruction of the first set of tablets at Horeb (9:17). In between the past and the future acts of writing, and late into Deuteronomy's discourse, is the explicit mention of Moses's writing (31:9, 24) of the Torah in Moses's present time at Moab. In terms of narrative sequence, Deuteronomy's account of the sacred writing moves from the past to the future and concludes with Moses's writing in the present. This narrative sequence serves Deuteronomy's goal of preparing Israel for the future in the land while drawing paradigmatic lessons from the past to serve their liminal "present" moment at Moab.[21] In our exploration of the mimesis of divine writing, we begin by turning to the significance of Moses's writing at the "present" time frame, which takes us to the end of Deuteronomy.

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[20] For a more general discussion of time and history in the OT, see Simon J. De Vries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). For the significance of time and place in Deuteronomy's theology, see McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 9–88.

[21] See McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 15.

Moses writes. By leaving the account of Moses's writing to the end, Deuteronomy underscores the completion of Moses's *Sepher Torah* as the means for hearing God's voice beyond the Jordan (31:2; 34:5–7). As Sonnet has argued persuasively, this delay in the explicit mention of Moses's writing is the climactic end to Deuteronomy's narrative strategy of arousing the curiosity and suspense of its readers by the repeated statements of a written *Sepher* (28:58, 61; 29:19, 20, 26; 30:10) at Moab and of the copying of the *Sepher* in the future (17:18; 27:3).[22] Deuteronomy "hints" that a written medium would preserve the divine voice in the Mosaic speech before it announces Moses's writing of the Torah and the completion of a *Sepher*. As we approach the end of Deuteronomy, the voice of YHWH is explicitly identified with the book of this Torah (30:10).[23] By delineating first the significance and relevance of a written Torah, especially with respect to the covenant at Moab (Deut 29–30) prior to the announcement of Moses's writing activity, Deuteronomy impresses upon its readers the essentiality of Moses's written Torah in Israel's present at Moab and future beyond Moab.

Moreover, the delay in announcing Moses's writing enables readers of Deuteronomy to encounter the spoken word of Moses themselves, albeit through a written Torah.[24] It is important to note that after its completion, the Mosaic Torah becomes accessible to hearing through private (the king; 17:19) and public reading (all Israel; 31:11). Deuteronomy is concerned that the post-Moab readers of the Mosaic Torah can also "hear" the spoken words of Moses as did the ancient Israelites by delaying the announcement of Moses's writing until the end. The individual and public reading of Moses's Torah book ensures that the divine voice can be heard by the future generation

[22] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 135.

[23] That Moses's written Torah is the referent in Deut 30:10 is missed by Colin Smothers in his recent work on Deut 30:12–14 in Paul's letters to the Romans, where he identifies this Torah with an "eschatological Torah." See Collin J. Smothers, "In Your Mouth and in Your Heart: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul's Letter to the Romans in Canonical Context" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 22, 28–94.

[24] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 261.

of readers. The immediacy of hearing the words of Moses is vital for Israel's obedience, for orality enhances the sense of Israel's nearness to the divine word that is crucial for their obedience: "For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off . . . . But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it" (30:11–14).[25] According to Ronald E. Clements, the theological significance of written prophecy is that "it could seek to defeat the tyranny of time by giving future generations the chance to hear messages from the past that had failed to enjoy the response their authors sought. More significantly, it could hope to counter the despair engendered by the seemingly irreversible nature of past follies."[26] Similarly, the written Mosaic Torah offers new opportunities for future readers to hear afresh and respond to Moses's teachings again and again.

In addition, Deuteronomy's placement of Moses's writing at the end brings together the ark of the covenant and Moses's Torah book right at the brink of Israel's crossing of the Jordan River after Moses's death (34:1–6).[27] The ark of the covenant was a mobile symbol of YHWH's abiding presence (Lev 16:2; Num 10:35; 1 Sam 4:4) and the place of communion between God and Moses (Num 7:89). In Deuteronomy, the divine institution of the Levites as the carriers of the ark, which contains the Decalogue, in 10:8–9 is not an intrusion into the flow of the text. Instead, it serves as an essential transition from the golden calf incident to a renewed permission for Israel to enter the land (10:11), driven forward by YHWH's re-writing of the Decalogue.[28] Hence, the carried ark becomes associated with the entrance into the land.

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[25] See also Pramod Talgeri, "Immediacy and Distanciation: From Orality to Written Culture," *Indian Literature* 37, no. 5 (1994): 116–24.

[26] Ronald E. Clements, "The Prophet as Author: The Case of the Isaiah Memoir," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi, Symposium Series (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2000), 101.

[27] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 227.

[28] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 66–67.

The Mosaic institution of the Levites to place his Torah book by the side (מצד) of the ark of the covenant (Deut 31:26) suggests then that the Mosaic Torah will accompany the ark—the symbol of the divine presence—across the Jordan into the land.[29] The symbolic act of the placing of Moses's Torah book alongside the ark of the covenant, which contains the unmediated written "Ten Words" of YHWH, is concomitant with the identification of the Mosaic Torah with the voice of God (30:10). By placing the completed Torah book alongside the ark of the covenant, Deuteronomy not only sets Moses's Torah book on equal status with the unmediated revelation of the Decalogue but also imbues the Torah book with the divine presence. Once the Israelites journey across the Jordan into the land, they would hear the voice of God and encounter the presence of God through Moses's Torah book. As indicated in Joshua 8:31, the voice of God as mediated through Moses—the instructions "just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded"—continues to be heard in the land through the "Torah book of Moses" (תורת משה בספר).

In short, the mention of Moses's writing of the Torah book at the end facilitates Deuteronomy's communicative goal of rendering Moses's completed Torah book as the medium of the divine presence and the divine voice. Israel's accessibility to God's voice does not cease with the death of God's prophet *par excellence*.

YHWH writes, so Moses writes. In Deuteronomy, the identification of the Mosaic Torah book with the voice of God involves not only an explicit textual assertion (as in 30:10) or via a symbolic act (as in the placing of the Torah book beside the ark of the covenant in 31:26) but also an emulation of divine writing. The placing of YHWH's writing at the front of Deuteronomy is intentional and has paradigmatic significance in Deuteronomy's theology of communication.

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[29] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 227.

It is important to note the parallels between YHWH's writing of the Decalogue and Moses's writing of the Torah. First, both are the writing of spoken words. At Horeb, the LORD gave to Moses "the two tablets of stones written by the finger of God, and upon them are all the words which the LORD has *spoken* with you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly" (9:10; cf. 10:4). Similarly, the Mosaic Torah consists of first and foremost oral words spoken to Israel: "These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel . . ." (1:1); "These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the rules which Moses spoke to the people of Israel . . ." (4:45). As such, the Mosaic voice must be heard since it is spoken into the people's ears (5:1). The writing of the Mosaic Torah, then, parallels YHWH's writing of spoken words. Second, there is a parallel between the way the completed writings of the Decalogue and the Mosaic Torah are handled. When YHWH has written the Decalogue, it is placed into the ark of the covenant (10:5). When Moses has completed the writing of his Torah book, it is placed beside the ark of the covenant (31:25–26). Thus, both the written tablets and the written Torah book become associated with the mobile ark, which signified the abiding presence of YHWH into the promised land.

Despite their similarities, there are also important differences between YHWH's writing of the Decalogue and Moses's writing of the Torah book. The tablets of the Decalogue are sealed in the ark, whereas the Torah book is placed beside (outside of) the ark. This difference in the handling of the Mosaic Torah book renders it accessible to Israel at all times. However, nowhere in Deuteronomy is there an indication that the Decalogue should be removed from the ark for reading or studying.[30] In contrast, the

[30] As Jeffrey Tigay has noted. See Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPS Tanakh Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 500.

words from the Torah book are to be read (31:11), learned and taught (6:6–9),[31] and written down in the land (6:9; 17:18; 27:3).

The sealing up of the Decalogue might seem strange or even contradictory, considering that Israel was commanded to listen, learn, and be careful to obey the commandments as their fathers did at Horeb (5:1, 27).[32] But what if the sealing up of the tablets is intended to make way for Moses's Torah book as the primary means by which the Decalogue can be heard? This interpretation is consonant with Moses's retelling of the Horeb revelation in 5:22–31. Accordingly, the words of the Decalogue are the final words spoken by YHWH to the people without Moses's mediation: "These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain . . ." (5:22). In agreement with the people's request (5:23–27), Moses is appointed as the authorized mediator to listen and to teach all that YHWH has revealed to him (5:31). Hence, a reasonable interpretation of the sealing of the Decalogue is that this is meant to make way for the Decalogue's disclosure through the Mosaic Torah for the post-Horeb generation. In other words, there is a continuity between YHWH's and Moses's writing. YHWH's writing becomes the archetype for the permanency of the divine voice in Israel's life, from which Moses's writing would become the chief and perpetual means for communicating not just the contents of the Decalogue but also the teachings about it.

If the above interpretation is correct, then it makes sense to conceive of YHWH's writing of the tablets as what Sonnet has termed foundational to Moses's writing of his Torah. In other words, Moses's writing emulates the divine writing of the tablets. We can further infer such mimesis of divine writing from the fact that nowhere in

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[31] While הדברים האלה ("these words") in Deut 6:6 might refer to the Shema (6:4) in the immediate context or to the Decalogue mentioned earlier, seen from the perspective of the complete Torah book, these are only accessible through the Mosaic Torah book.

[32] Hence, Sonnet states, "A hermetic sealing of the 'ten words' within the ark, without any divulging of their content, would be biblical nonsense, a blatant contradiction of the Hebrew Bible's policy to make 'the essentials . . . transparent to all comers'." Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 68.

Deuteronomy records any divine authorization for Moses to write his Torah.[33] In contrast, the only divine stipulation for Moses to write is in 31:19, when Moses is commanded to "write this song" (השׁירה הזאת). The song was likely written as an addendum to Moses's Torah to form the completed Torah book.[34] Moses emulates YHWH's writing of the tablet to ensure the perpetuity of the communication of divine words.[35] We are led to this conclusion based on the confluence of factors such as the parallels and continuity between YHWH's and Moses's writing and the identification of the Torah with God's voice through explicit verbal association (30:10) and a symbolic act.

Israel writes what Moses had already written. As already mentioned above, Deuteronomy's theology of communication does not end with Moses's written Torah. The mentions of the Israelites' writing takes place early into the book of Deuteronomy: "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart . . . . You shall teach them diligently to your children . . . . You shall bind them as a sign on your hand . . . . You shall write them on the doorposts of your house . . ." (6:6–9). There is an implicit mention of writing—through the making of a sign (אות)—and an explicit mention of writing—in the command to write "them" on the doorposts.

The content of what Israel is to write is defined by the phrase "these words [הדברים האלה] that I command you today" (6:6), which is described earlier in 6:1: "Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it." It is clear then that the content that Israel must write when they enter the land is Moses's teaching, the Mosaic Torah. Hereby using the present-time indicator

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[33] Admittedly, if this is the only factor for consideration, then it could well be an argument from silence.

[34] See Sonnet's arguments. Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 151.

[35] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 151.

היום ("this day"), Moses reverts from his historical recounting of the Sinai/Horeb event in 5:22–33 to his present-day situation at Moab. Hence, the reference to Moses's teaching is the teachings promulgated at Moab. Yet, the command to write is given in anticipation of the future when God would bring Israel into the land "to give you cities, both great and good, that you did not build, and houses filled with all good things" (6:10). Since only the Mosaic Torah, not Moses, would accompany Israel into the land, the words that Moses command could only be accessed via Moses's Torah book. As such, while the Israelites at Moab could well inscribe the Mosaic teachings that they hear at Moab, the post-Moab generations could only write down Moses's teaching according to what Moses has written in his Torah book.

Here, then, we have a picture of Israel's writing as Moses has written. More importantly, as Sonnet puts it, "in the covenantal world projected by Moses's speech, the people are capable of writing, exactly as is YHWH, who has been described in the act of writing."[36] In other words, there is an emulation of writing between Israel and Moses and between Moses and God.

Torah as Divine Discourse

The Mosaic Torah provides an essential paradigm for how human words are regarded as divine discourse. Since the notion of divine revelation is typically equated with direct verbal communication from God to human beings, divine speech is limited to a citation or the use of divine words. According to such a view, there is no place for human agency in the production of divine speech. While Deuteronomy embraces unmediated divine verbal communication, the medium for divine communication is not limited to such. Deuteronomy enables us to see, in contrast to a narrowly defined understanding of divine communication, how the voice and writings of Moses count as

[36] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 56.

the voice and the writings of God. According to Deuteronomy's theology of communication, there is a concursus between human and divine agency in the production of a canonical sacred text. Deuteronomy shows how the words of the human author are identical to the words of God. Moses's emulation of divine writing allows both divine and human agency to work in concurrence through the Mosaic Torah.

Deuteronomy provides an interesting model of hearing the divine voice through human speech for an interaction with Wolterstorff's conception of divine discourse. In contrast to a narrowly defined understanding of divine speech devoid of human involvement, Wolterstorff provides another way to think of the relationship between divine speech and human speech, what he terms "double agency discourse,"[37] that might illuminate our understanding of how the Torah and wisdom function as divine discourse. Wolterstorff's concern is to present different modes of divine discourse/speech that are not limited to prophetic revelation. By analogy to human discourse, Wolterstorff suggests several ways in which a discourser can "say things with words." Wolterstorff distinguishes between two types of double agency discourse: deputized discourse and appropriated discourse.

Wolterstorff's Deputized Discourse

In a deputized discourse, a discourser communicates by deputizing another agent to speak on his behalf. Accordingly, the relationship between a discourser and his agent varies in degrees of superintendence and authority endowed upon the agent. First, a discourser can assume a high level of superintendence by dictating his words to a scribe. In this case, the scribe assumes little or no authority of freedom in transcribing the discourser's words. Second, a discourser can indicate the substance of his intent and authorize his agent to produce a text that represents his intent. An ambassador speaking

[37] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 38–51.

on behalf of his president would be a case in point. This model entails a lesser degree of superintendence and greater autonomy for the agent to express the discourser's intent using the agent's own words. Finally, an agent (such as the executive's secretary) may discourse without the instruction or knowledge of the discourser but nevertheless accurately communicates the will of the discourser by virtue of his knowledge of the discourser's will. In the last instance, there is little or no superintendence on the discourser's part while the agent communicates freely under the authorization of the discourser. In each of the cases, the agent produces a discourse after having been deputized by the discourser to do so in varying modes of superintendence. The locutionary acts of the agent *count as* the illocutionary acts of the discourser. Wolterstorff sees "deputized discourse" as characteristic of the prophetic literature in which biblical prophets are commissioned to speak "in the name of the Lord."[38]

Within the category of a deputized discourse, Wolterstorff further distinguishes between a deputization "to speak in the name of God" with an agent's own discourse and "the commission to communicate a message from God."[39] Wolterstorff notes that the OT prophetic literature often blends these two types of deputized discourse. The prophets both communicate a message directly from God and speak in the name of God with their own words.

According to Wolterstorff, then, the determining factor for what distinguishes a biblical text as a deputized discourse is the commissioning of a prophetic writer "to speak in God's name."[40] Here, Wolterstorff distances himself from what he regards as the problematic equation of prophetic revelation with divine verbal communication.[41] A

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[38] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 48.

[39] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 48–50.

[40] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 46–48.

[41] See Wolterstorff's chap. 2 as well as his analysis and critique of Paul Ricœur's approach to revelation. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 19–36, 58–63.

deputized discourse is broad enough to embrace the notion that God can speak through a deputized agent's own discourse even with little or no supervision.

Wolterstorff's Appropriated Discourse

Wolterstorff's second categor of double agency discourse is appropriated discourse.[42] The primary difference between appropriated discourse and deputized discourse is that in the former, there is no explicit deputization that takes place. The discourser does not commission the agent to discourse on his behalf, and the agent does not see himself as having been deputized to speak.[43] In such cases, the agent is not even aware of the act of appropriation. The illocutionary stance of an agent's discourse does not even need to coincide with the illocutionary stance of the discourser's appropriating the agent's discourse (e.g., person A may cite person B's narration of a life experience as a parable of life in general). However, a discourser can appropriate discourses produced by another by asserting that the particular discourse is reflective of his will (such as by uttering "I agree with that" or "I share his commitment") or by coopting another discourse for his own illocutionary act.

Wolterstorff perceives that most texts of the Bible—those consisting of non-prophetic texts, such as the narrative books, the wisdom writings, but especially the Psalms—are divinely appropriated discourses. According to Wolterstorff, the nature of biblical wisdom literature and the Psalms is primarily "anthropocentric"—meaning that these are human addresses of the things of God or to God and not God's addresses to human beings. Nevertheless, Wolterstorff argues that despite their human-centered origin, these texts can still be regarded as divine discourse. By virtue of the canonical status of these books (i.e., the historical fact of their being included into a single book of God), non-prophetic texts, such as Proverbs and the Psalms, may be regarded as "divinely

[42] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 51–54.

[43] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 52.

appropriated human discourse."[44] The process of canonization, then, can be considered the event that "*counts as* God's appropriating this totality [the Bible] as the medium of God's own discourse."[45] In other words, these texts that originated by human being's own initiative—without explicit deputization from God—can be counted as God's appropriated discourse simply because they *belong* to the biblical canon. Unfortunately, Wolterstorff does not provide any other criteria for determining how a text "belongs" to the canon other than the reception of these texts as canonical by the church.

It is important to note that Wolterstorff emphasizes the distinctiveness of the agencies behind an appropriated discourse. While God is the agent of appropriating the discourse, the human authors are the agents of the appropriated discourse.[46] In other words, God is the agent who appropriates discourses produced by human agents. Wolterstorff does not think that any form of divine supervision or inspiration in the production of human discourse is necessary in order for the text to be counted as a divine discourse. He reasons that the sovereignty and freedom of a divine Creator to intervene and act in his creatures' lives are good grounds for conceiving that God is able to appropriate any human discourse as divine discourse.

Wolterstorff develops his model of appropriated discourse further with his *double hermeneutic*.[47] The first hermeneutic involves the interpretation of the authorial intent of the human writers themselves, taking into account their particular literary and historical contexts. The second hermeneutic then involves the task of discerning what God is saying through the authorial intent of these human-generated texts. Since God can

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[44] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 53–54.

[45] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 54.

[46] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 54.

[47] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 183–222.

appropriate any human discourse, divine authorial intention does not necessarily need to align with the original human intention of the appropriated text.

In Wolterstorff's thought, the concept of double agency is the common denominator of both deputized divine discourse and appropriated divine discourse. A deputized divine discourse can be one in which an agent speaks his own words "in the name of" the deputizer. In other words, both deputized and appropriated discourse can be produced by human agents and still be counted as divine discourses. When these categories of double agency discourse are applied to biblical wisdom, it does not really matter to Wolterstorff what is the provenance of the book of Proverbs or of the gnomic saying within the collections of proverbs. The fact that these proverbs are found within the single "book of God" is sufficient to count these as appropriated divine discourse. It is, however, important to note that Wolterstorff maintains that a deputized discourse can also be an appropriated discourse since the deputizing agent can appropriate his deputy's discourse that has not been supervised by him.

Wolterstorffian Divine Discourse in Dialogue with Deuteronomy's Theology of Communication

Wolterstorff has provided significant insights on thinking of how human and divine speech actions can concur as divine discourse.[48] More importantly, Wolterstorff works to reverse the modern affliction of what Michael Fishbane terms "a massive reduction of Scripture as a *Sondersprache* [unique or special communication] to Scripture as a conditioned language, like any human language."[49] According to Wolterstorff, the involvement of genuine human agency is no defeater for considering a biblical text as

[48] For a more elaborate discussion of Wolterstorff's contribution, see Anthony C. Thiselton, "Speech-Act Theory and the Claim That God Speaks: Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Divine Discourse*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50, no. 1 (1997): 97–110.

[49] Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 44.

divine discourse. Wolterstorff explicates how human discourse can be counted as divine discourse, placing divine agency in the forefront of our conception of Scripture. Despite his contribution, I will delineate some objections as well as revisions to Wolterstorff's models of divine discourse based on Deuteronomy's theology of communication.

No sharp distinction between deputized and appropriated discourse. First, the deputized and appropriated discourse should not be so distinguished that they are construed as rigid categories. Wolterstorff acknowledges that while there is "no deputizing and no speaking in the name of" in appropriated discourses, deputized speech is also considered a form of appropriated speech.[50] Accordingly, a deputized discourse is also a form of appropriated discourse, especially when there is little or no supervision provided by the deputizing agent. However, Wolterstorff maintains that an appropriated discourse cannot be a deputized discourse. According to Mark Bowald, Wolterstorff's differentiating appropriated discourse from deputized discourse based on the lack of awareness of the deputy-deputizer relationship is problematic when applied to God.[51] While it could well be that God did not deputize someone to speak (e.g., the false prophets in the OT), it does not follow that God, like human agents, could not be aware of someone speaking in representative ways. Bowald helpfully points out that Wolterstorff does not consider the scenario where there can be deputization even without the knowledge of the deputy.[52] In this case, God can deputize a discourse without the human discourser's being privy to the deputization. This process entails divine inspiration in a way that the product of human words serves as a divinely deputized discourse, which

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[50] Wolterstorff acknowledges that while there is "no deputizing and no speaking in the name of" in appropriated discourses, deputized speech is also considered a form of appropriated speech. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 52.

[51] Mark A. Bowald, *Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics: Mapping Divine and Human Agency* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 192.

[52] Bowald, *Rendering the Word*, 143–44.

can also be a kind of appropriated discourse. There is no reason to assume that divine authorization or deputization could not also involve divine inspiration. Hence, contrary to Wolterstorff's suggestion, the "anthropocentric" biblical texts that articulate human perspective about God (e.g., Proverbs, Psalms) need not be construed as human discourses devoid of divine superintendence.[53]

As such, it is not necessary to draw a sharp distinction between appropriated discourse and deputized discourse. Nothing prevents God from superintending via internal influence an appropriated discourse to function in a way according to his intended appropriation. Given a biblical text's canonical status, then, it is arguable that a text belonging to the so-called "appropriated discourse" may exhibit certain signs of "deputization" that are not limited to the public commissioning of its discourser. For example, on account of Proverbs' Solomonic ascriptions (Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1), it is possible to regard the divine gifting of wisdom as a sort of deputization (cf. Prov 2:6; 1 Kgs 3:11–15). In short, while God could appropriate a human discourse without his immediate supervision, he could also deputize a human to speak his discourse without the human subject's awareness of such deputization (i.e., via prophetic commissioning).

"Deputized discourse" in the Mosaic tradition. Second, Wolterstorff unnecessarily limits the concept of deputization to explicit prophetic commissioning. This characteristic of deputized discourse is how Wolterstorff distinguishes between prophetic texts and non-prophetic texts in the Bible. However, to equate "prophetic commissioning" with speaking in the name of God is too restrictive. According to

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[53] While Wolterstorff affirms that appropriated discourse can involve divine supervision, he thinks it is not necessary for a human discourse to be supervised in order to be appropriated as a divine discourse. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 52. It appears, however, that in his attempt to argue for the possibility of incorporating discourse of entirely human origin into God's appropriated discourse, Wolterstorff wants to stress the total autonomy of human agents from divine influence. Mary Hesse has criticized Wolterstorff for unnecessarily removing the notion of divine superintendence in his first hermeneutic. Mary Hesse, "How to Be a Postmodernist and Remain Christian: A Response to Nicholas Wolterstorff," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 94–95.

Deuteronomy 18:15–22, the passage cited as Wolterstorff's proof text for his deputized discourse, "speaking in the name of God" is not highlighted as the central defining feature of prophetic discourse. That speaking in God's name does not suffice as divine authorization is clear from verse 20, when a prophet who speaks presumptuously in the name of YHWH articulates words that YHWH has not commanded him to speak. Thus, the content of the prophet's words matters as much as the claims of divine commissioning.

In his discussion of false prophecy in Jeremiah, Wolterstorff seems to be aware that a prophet who claims to speak in God's name is not necessarily authorized by God; however, Wolterstorrf continues to make divine commissioning the mark of a true prophet.[54] It appears that Wolterstorff is making a distinction between a true divine commissioning by God and a prophet's own claim to divine appointment (i.e., to speak in God's name presumptuously). So Wolterstorff asserts that a prophetic of the former category will indeed speak in God's name the message given by God, but a prophet of the latter category is a mere prophetic pretender. However, the concern of Deuteronomy 18:21 is precisely how the people would know the difference. The solution prescribed by Deuteronomy is the veracity and fulfillment of the word spoken (v. 22). But given Deuteronomy's context, even this criterion is not decisive. In 13:1–5, if the illocutionary intent of a fulfilled prophecy is to lead Israel astray to follow other gods, then the prophet is considered to be committing high treason against YHWH (v. 5).[55] This suggests that the criteria for true prophecy given in 18:22 must be understood in the context of the aims and goals of the book of Deuteronomy.

As we have seen, Deuteronomy's theology of communication underscores the role of Moses as the authorized mediator of divine speech. In the same vein, 18:15–16

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[54] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 49–50.

[55] See also Gene Tucker's discussion. Gene M. Tucker, "Deuteronomy 18:15–22," *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 292–97.

sets the context for the provision of prophecy by referring back to the foundational event of the revelation at Horeb. It explicitly recalls the people's request for a mediator (v. 16). By conflating the account that authorized his own teachings (cf. 5:25–31) with the divine provision of a prophet like Moses (18:18), which the audience has not heard before, Moses reifies his role as the paradigm for future prophecy.[56] Hence, the criteria for true prophecy must be read in the context of Moses as the fountainhead of the prophetic ministry. Speaking in the name of YHWH is an attribute of the Mosaic Torah. True prophetic discourses are fundamentally in accord with the Mosaic Torah and not merely a matter of being deputized to speak in YHWH's name.[57]

As such, Rolf Rendtorff helpfully points out that within the Hebrew Bible canon (i.e., the Tanakh), the Torah (the Pentateuch) serves as the foundation for life and thought for Israel.[58] In each part of the Prophets and the Writings, we can find similar accents on the Torah. Just as the conclusion of the Torah anticipates future prophecy in the Mosaic tradition (Deut 34:10), so also in reverse fashion the conclusion of the canon of the Prophets reminds readers to "remember the law of my servant Moses" (Mal 3:22 [Eng. 4:4]). We can find similar accents on the Torah in the Writings (Pss 1; 119). As I will argue in the next chapter, we can find allusions to Torah concepts in the book of Proverbs as well. This raises an important question: Could not speaking/writing in accord with the Mosaic Torah count as "speaking in God's name?" As I have argued above, Deuteronomy answers the question in the affirmative: Speaking in God's name

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[56] Cf. Dominik Markl, "Moses Prophetenrolle in Dtn 5; 18; 34: Strukturelle Wendepunkte von rechtshermeneutischem Gewicht," in *Deuteronomium, Tora für eine neue Generation*, ed. Georg Fischer, Dominik Markl, and Simone Paganini, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte 17 (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2011), 57.

[57] Since Wellhausen promoted the idea that the Law dates later then the Prophets, the dependency of the OT prophetic literature on a Mosaic tradition has been disputed. It goes beyond the scope of this dissertation to argue for this point. For a more elaborate description and defense of Israelite prophecy in accordance with the Mosaic tradition, see David N. DeJong, "A Prophet like Moses: Prophecy and Canon in Early Judaism and Christianity" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2016).

[58] Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 5–6.

constitutes speaking as God has spoken through the Mosaic Torah. Furthermore, in Deuteronomy, Israel writes as Moses and God have written. As I will argue in the next chapter, the principles of "speaking as God has spoken through the Mosaic Torah" and "writing as Moses and God have written" also undergird wisdom's discourse. But it goes beyond the limits of this project to answer this question with respect to the whole of the Hebrew Bible in any comprehensive way.

Authorization, identification, and emulation: Concurrentism in divine discourse. Third, according to Wolterstorff, the qualification of a divinely appropriated human discourse is that it belongs to the canonical Scriptures.[59] However, this qualification can be further explicated: Just how does a human discourse show that it belongs to the canonical Scriptures? While Wolterstorff rightly puts the emphasis on divine initiative (God's deputizing or God's appropriating), there is still the general question of how the divine initiative can be recognized within the canonical Scriptures. Here, we can synthesize Wolterstorff's concern for how human discourse can be appropriated as divine discourse with Deuteronomy's theology of communication. The book of Deuteronomy, known as "the canonical book par excellence"[60] or the "initial embodiment of a canonical composition in Israel,"[61] explicates how this book, produced via human agency, can be regarded as divine discourse.

As we have seen above, the counting of the Mosaic Torah as divine discourse involves Moses's own identification of his Torah book with the divine voice as well as his emulation of divine writing. Combined with the divine authorization of Moses's mediatorial role as the teacher of divine revelation, Moses's mimetic actions and his

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[59] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 53–54.

[60] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 40.

[61] Jonathan Ben-Dov, "Writing as Oracle and as Law: New Contexts for the Book-Find of King Josiah," *JBL* 127, no. 2 (2008): 227.

identification of his speech with the divine voice further reinforce the notion that his Torah book indeed encapsulates the voice of the living God. By speaking and acting in accord with God's action and speech (i.e., God's writing the tablets, giving the Decalogue, instituting its placing in the ark, authorizing Moses as his mediator), Moses demonstrates the divine authority inherent within his Torah and legitimizes the identification of his Torah with the divine voice. As such, the three elements of authorization of the human discourser, the self-identification of the discourser's words as divine speech, and the mimesis of divine actions and divine speech work in tandem to count a human discourse as a divine discourse.

It is important to note that Deuteronomy's theology of communication brings together the notion of imitation of God and divine concursus. One typically encounters the concept of the imitation of God in scholarly explorations of OT ethics.[62] Hence, the emphasis of *imitatio Dei* is on human conduct and human agency. It is interesting to note that *imitatio Dei* is commonly perceived as an alternative to the command-obedience model of ethics. As Eryl W. Davies writes, "The presence in the Old Testament of the concept of *imitatio Dei*, however, may serve as a salutary reminder that the moral requirements demanded of God's people are not always couched in the language of law, and that there is far more to Old Testament ethics than the mere observance of prescribed rules."[63] In Deuteronomy, we encounter the concept of *imitatio Dei* not only in the ethical commands (e.g., 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 15:13–15; 26:17) but also in the mimesis of divine writing. We have noted in Moses's emulation of YHWH's writing the absence of any explicit divine stipulation for Moses to write his Torah. Here, the "ethics" of writing the

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[62] Although, John Barton observes that it has been a much neglected concept in OT ethics until recent times. See John Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003). See also Eryl W. Davies, "Walking in God's Ways: The Concept of *Imitatio Dei* in the Old Testament," in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements*, ed. R. E. Clements and Edward Ball, JSOTSup (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 99–115.

[63] Davies, "Walking in God's Ways," 114.

Torah book takes on the concept of *imitatio Dei* naturally. However, in the context of divine communication, *imitatio Dei* does not remain at the level of human agency. The identification of the Mosaic Torah book as the embodiment of the voice of God (28:1, 2; 30:10) suggests that the divine action of speaking comes through human agency. Central to Deuteronomy's concern is that the future generation of Israelites would have access not only to the Mosaic Torah but, more importantly, to the divine voice through the Mosaic Torah.

From the perspective of the phenomenology of emulation, the human agency of Moses acts in concord with the divine act of speaking. From the perspective of a hermeneutic of suspicion, the Mosaic assertion that the Torah is identical with God's voice might easily be deemed as "decided opportunism" on Moses's part.[64] However, such skepticism runs counter to Deuteronomy's own witness of the practical need to preserve the divine voice through the Mosaic teaching in its written form.[65] More significantly, it is important to note that God's speaking is a form of divine action, a divine self-disclosure that is based entirely on God's freedom rather than on human ideology or initiative.[66] This point is corroborated by Deuteronomy's emphasis on the divine authorization and appointment of Moses as the mediator of divine speech.

Furthermore, we should not overlook the significance of the Sinaitic revelatory event in Moses's experience. The Sinai event constitutes a foundational Mosaic encounter with God that shapes Moses's perception of God and the nature of divine

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[64] A possibility raised and dismissed by Sonnet. Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 47.

[65] Gerald Sheppard counters the reflexes of a hermeneutic of suspicion by appealing to a "hermeneutics of emphatic imagination" that "allow us to imagine their practical need to create a single scroll. Their anxiety of influence and aim of preservation, and their efforts to make explicit some things that seemed too implicit for an unlearned public hearing of the scroll." Gerald T. Sheppard, "Biblical Wisdom Literature and the End of the Modern Age," in *Congress Volume: Oslo 1998*, ed. André Lemaire and Magne Sæbo, VTSup 80 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 383.

[66] See Christoph Schwöbel, *God: Action and Revelation*, Studies in Philosophical Theology (Leuven: Peeters, 1992). For how divine speech constitutes a divine action, see also Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 19–36.

communication. As William Alston has argued, such direct experiential encounters with God are formative experiences in a person's life. Such experience of God "greatly enlivens one's religious life" and stimulates "one's aspiration to virtue and holiness."[67] Hence, a better way of understanding the Mosaic emulation of divine writing is by placing the accent on divine agency. The combined illocutionary force of God's speaking and writing, together with his act of deputization, achieves the perlocutionary effect of Moses's emulation of divine writing. In other words, while Mosaic agency is genuinely efficacious in producing Moses's own words, which are written into a *Sepher*, Mosaic agency is nevertheless contingent upon YHWH's agency to (re)produce the voice of God. The phenomenology of mimesis in Deuteronomy's theology of communication is a manifestation of a concurrentism between divine and human agency. Speaking in God's name, writing as an emulation of divine writing, and identifying human discourse with the divine voice are essential ways that manifest the concurrentism between divine and human agency in the production of sacred texts. By virtue of concurrentism, we cannot merely settle at the phenomenological level of human agency but must properly ascribe the primary cause of the production of sacred texts to divine agency.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have argued that Deuteronomy's conception of the Mosaic Torah as divine discourse is not limited by a conception of divine revelation that only accounts for the divine agency in the production of divine verbal communication. Instead, as I have contended, Deuteronomy depicts the Mosaic Torah as a production of Moses's genuine agency that can be properly counted as a divine discourse through authorization, identification with the divine voice, and the mimesis of divine writing. Further, I have explored how Wolterstorff's conception of divine discourse, with some modifications and

[67] William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 303. Cf. Craig S. Bartholomew, *The God Who Acts in History: The Significance of Sinai* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 185.

qualifications, is helpful in thinking about the relationship between human and divine agency in divine discourse. As such, by using Deuteronomy as a paradigm for divine discourse, we are now ready to examine how the book of Proverbs should also be taken as a divine discourse.

CHAPTER 6

WISDOM AS DIVINE DISCOURSE

The predominant view among scholars is that wisdom and Torah belong to two different traditions; they are "two great streams" that "eventually flow together" and "find their outlet in rabbinic writings and early Christianity."[1] Sirach's identification of wisdom with Torah is often seen as the beginning of the confluence of these two traditions[2] amidst a growing recognition of the interrelatedness of wisdom and Torah within Israelite society.[3] Accordingly, before the intersection of the two traditions, wisdom and Torah are often perceived as standing in tension with one another, characterized by a swing from pan-Deuteronomism to pan-sapientialism.[4] Framed by the assumption of tension between wisdom and Torah, scholars construe either Deuteronomy as subsuming wisdom under Torah or Proverbs as subsuming Torah under wisdom.[5] In reality, the relationship between wisdom and Torah in the book of Proverbs might be more complex than it appears. Bernd Schipper's recent analysis reveals three ways in

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[1] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism*, Oxford Bible Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 14.

[2] As Michael Fox notes, "Ben Sira was the first to identify wisdom with Torah, thus removing any tension between them and obviating the need to negotiate their relative status." Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18B (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 951.

[3] Schnabel notes that wisdom and law are already closely associated in the Old Testament. For an overview, see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul: A Tradition Historical Enquiryi into the Relation of Law, Wisdom, and Ethics*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 1–7.

[4] Will Kynes, "The Modern Scholarly Wisdom Tradition and the Threat of Pan-Sapientialism: A Case Report," in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies*, ed. Mark R. Sneed, Ancient Israel and Its Literature (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 36–55.

[5] See Fox's survey in Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 951–62.

which wisdom relates to Torah in Proverbs 1–9.[6] His analysis, however, stems from a similar supposition of the tension between wisdom and Torah, and between human and divine agency, which in the end undermines the legitimacy of Proverbs' testimony to the significance of wisdom. This chapter will examine how the two streams of wisdom and Torah meet, not in terms of two disparate traditions but as divine discourses, each in its own right.

As I have already discussed, wisdom is typically viewed as, in J. A. Loader's words, deficient in her appeal to divine revelation—taken exclusively to refer to prophetic revelation. But does the lack of citations of divine words necessarily lead to the conclusion that wisdom is an "alternative to divine revelation?"[7] The answer proposed by various scholars is a nuanced "yes" and "no." Indeed, wisdom does not draw directly from verbal revelation. Nowhere in Proverbs do the sages invoke the prophetic formula "Thus says the LORD." In Proverbs 1 and 8, Lady Wisdom does not speak God's words but her own words. Michael Fox states it this way: "Lady wisdom speaks wisdom—her own, not God's. Nowhere does she 'bear' revelation. She is not a prophet or messenger transmitting God's message, although she does have certain features of a prophet . . . and an angel."[8] Hence, instead of divine revelation, scholars have focused their arguments on the divine inspiration of wisdom.

A key argument for divine inspiration involves Proverbs' Solomonic ascriptions (e.g., Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1). Joseph Blenkinsopp argues that before the writing down of Solomon's plenteous proverbs (מִשְׁלֵי) and songs (שִׁיר), which are mentioned in 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon was already established as an Israelite sage *par excellence* (1 Kgs

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[6] Bernd U. Schipper, "When Wisdom Is Not Enough! The Discourse on Wisdom and Torah and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs," in *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of "Torah" in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Bernd U. Schipper and David Andrew Teeter, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 63–76.

[7] Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 950.

[8] Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 949.

4:29–31 [MT 5:9–11]). That Solomon's wisdom was divinely bestowed (1 Kgs 4:29 [MT 5:12]) implies that there is an "authoritative sapiential tradition" after Solomon's name to which divine inspiration and special authority are ascribed. Hence, to ascribe Proverbs to Solomon's name is an intimation of its divine inspiration and special authority.[9] The Solomonic ascriptions indicate a divine authorization for Solomon to write sacred texts.

Also, according to Gerald Shepphard, "the frequent postbiblical description of Solomon as a 'prophet' by both Jews and Christians confirms his appointment by God to 'write' and to 'testify,' like Moses (cf. Deut 31: 24–30)."[10] As illustrative of Sheppard's observation, the Babylonian Talmud features an attempt to justify Solomon's place as a prophet. In Rosh Hashanah 1:6, an objection is raised that Solomon could not be a prophet like Moses. The response is that Deuteronomy 34:10 means that there would be no "prophet" who has risen like Moses. According to the Talmudic rejoinder, Deuteronomy 34:10 does not eliminate the possibility of "among the kings, there has arisen another individual such as Moses."[11] With an emphasis on Solomon's "prophetic" status, scholars have argued for wisdom's inspired status along the lines of wisdom's "extensive prophetic portrayal."[12]

Although I generally concur with these arguments for the divine "inspiration" of Proverbs, as I have mentioned in my introductory comments in chapter 1, the concept of inspiration, at least in the current milieu of biblical scholarship, is not enough to shift the accent of agency from human to divine. This tendency is exemplified by, among

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[9] Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law*, 2–3.

[10] Gerald T. Sheppard, "Biblical Wisdom Literature and the End of the Modern Age," in *Congress Volume: Oslo 1998*, ed. André Lemaire and Magne Sæbo, VTSup 80 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 389.

[11] Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2011), 6B:118.

[12] See Gerlinde Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1–9: Traditionsgeschichtliche und Theologische Studien*, FAT 16 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 289; Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 161; Will Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 235–38.

others, Gerald Sheppard in his construal of wisdom (and Torah) as a "human testimony to revelation."[13] Consequently, there is a question of about the availability of textual evidence to conceive of wisdom in Proverbs as more than just "a human testimony to revelation." This issue is particularly pertinent in light of my arguments that the book of Proverbs perceives a compatibilism between human and divine agency grounded on God, the sovereign Creator, as the primary causal agent. The issue of the divine and human agency of Proverbial wisdom intermingles with the issue of divine inspiration and revelation in Proverbs. But there are good reasons to think of Proverbs as divine discourse, just as there are good reasons to conceive of the divine-human relationship in Proverbs in terms of concurrentism—that is, in terms of God's accompanying human agency in the production of the book of Proverbs.

As I have noted in chapter 1, part of the problem is the ambiguity of the terms "revelation" and "inspiration." On the one hand, scholars like Fox would dismiss Proverbs' appeal to revelation along the lines of prophetic revelation. On the other hand, scholars like Gerhard von Rad would have no problem calling wisdom "a bearer of revelation" in ways that are "considerably different from what it is in the prophets."[14] As pointed out, the term "inspiration" can also lean to the priority of either divine or human agency.

I have contended that Deuteronomy provides a biblical paradigm by which we can think of human words as God's voice (Deut 30:10). Nicholas Wolterstorff's concept of divine discourse comes closer to the concept of the divine voice than either revelation or inspiration. As such, I have adopted his concept of divine discourse as a heuristic tool for understanding Deuteronomy's theology of communication that properly considers the dual agencies of divine speech. As I have argued in chapter 5, according to

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[13] Sheppard, "Biblical Wisdom Literature," 389.

[14] Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 163.

Deuteronomy's theology of communication, the Mosaic Torah is construed as a product of Mosaic agency that is the only means by which Israel will hear of what YHWH has revealed to Moses. What has been said to Moses at Sinai is no longer accessible to Israel apart from the Mosaic Torah. Though the product of Mosaic agency, Deuteronomy still "counts" the written Mosaic Torah (i.e., the teachings of Moses) as a divine discourse.

It is important to state before moving on the differences between Solomonic wisdom and the Mosaic Torah. In Deuteronomy, Moses is declared the prophet *par excellence* whom "the LORD knew face to face" (34:10). The Mosaic teaching (hence, Mosaic agency) received explicit divine authorization when the LORD said to Moses, "All the commandments and the statutes and the rules [כל־המצוה והחקים והמשפטים] that you shall teach them . . ." (Deut 5:30). In contrast, other than the attribution of wisdom to divine bestowal (1 Kgs 3:12; 4:29 [MT 5:12]; Prov 2:6), there is no indication in either Proverbs or 1 Kings that YHWH spoke face to face with the sages or with Solomon, respectively.

Nevertheless, the production of Solomonic proverbs is portrayed as analogous to the Mosaic commission to teach/speech. The Israelite historian considers Solomon's speaking of "3000 proverbs" (1 Kgs 4:32 [MT 5:12]) to be a result of the divine bestowal of wisdom: "And God gave Solomon wisdom [חכמה] and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind [רחב לב] like the sand on the seashore . . ." (1 Kgs 4:29 [MT 5:9]). Though the production of proverbs is attributed to Solomonic agency, it nevertheless is a result of the divine bestowal of wisdom. Similarly, Moses's Torah—construed as Moses's speech and a production of Mosaic agency—stems from divine bestowal. In Deuteronomy, divine bestowal involves YHWH's speaking to Moses all of the commandments, statutes, and rules. However, as noted in chapter 5, the Mosaic teaching is not a mere recitation of divine words but involves Mosaic agency in the production of הדברים: "These are the words [הדברים] which Moses spoke . . ." (Deut 1:1). There are no explicit divine stipulations given for Moses's writing. As such, while

YHWH does give Moses the legal stipulations that he is to teach, it is a mimesis of divine writing that accounts for the written words of the Torah we now have access to. Despite their differences, Deuteronomy's theology for taking human words as the divine voice serves as a paradigm for taking Proverbs as divine discourse.

That the Deuteronomic Torah can serve as a paradigm for reading wisdom as divine discourse is intimated by Sheppard, even though he employs the term "human testimony to revelation" instead of divine speech. Having distinguished "wisdom" and "torah" as categories of Jewish scripture (i.e., divinely inspired instructions) from wisdom or Torah as biblical genres, Sheppard writes, "Since the written Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy) of Moses is presented clearly as a human testimony to a revelation of the torah, then the biblical wisdom literature also belongs to Jewish scripture as a human testimony to God's revelation of torah."[15] In this chapter, I will argue that while there is no mention of divine speaking in Proverbs, there is, nevertheless, a deliberate identification of the sages' words with the divine voice and a mimesis of divine communicative action in Proverbs. In short, notwithstanding their differences, the book of Proverbs can rightly be taken as a divine discourse just as the Mosaic Torah is a divine discourse.

First, I will examine how Proverbs identifies wisdom's words as a divine discourse in Proverbs 2:6. Second, I will inquire into wisdom's Torah-likeness. From here onward, I will examine how wisdom appropriates Torah's attributes and reception to indicate its similarities with the divine Torah. Third, I will discuss the mimesis of divine speech by personified wisdom's appropriation of divine speech. Since the second and third sections involve intertextual connections between wisdom and non-wisdom texts, I will briefly delineate my approach to intertextuality at the beginning of the second

[15] Sheppard, "Biblical Wisdom Literature," 379.

section. Lastly, I will delineate how wisdom's action corresponds with divine action in the book of Proverbs.

Wisdom from the Mouth of God: The Identification of Wisdom's Words as Divine Discourse

The question of whether Proverbs provide an explicit statement to inform readers to read the text as divine discourse rests on the interpretation of Proverbs 2:6b and, to a lesser extent, the significance of Agur's oracles in 30:1–9. In this section, I will focus my discussion on the importance of Proverbs 2:6 as an explicit claim of Proverbial wisdom as divine discourse.

Most scholars agree that Proverbs 2:6 is concerned with with the divine provenance of wisdom. The apodoses in verses 1–4 set out the conditions by which the son would be able to "understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God," as stated in the protasis of verse 5. The conditions for attaining the fear of the LORD and the discovery of the knowledge of God involve the son's cherishing and giving attention to the father's words and his seeking after wisdom (e.g., insight and understanding). Verse 6 then states with a כי clause that such an attainment is possible due to a divine bestowal of wisdom. As such, Proverbs 2:6b has been interpreted as a generic divine gifting of wisdom, the endowment of sapiential ability, and the verbal inspiration of wisdom's words:

Prov 2:6b	כי יהוה יתן חכמה מפיו דעת ותבונה	For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth knowledge and understanding.

However, few scholars distinguish the second stanza of 2:6 from the first, reading the two lines synonymously as connoting a general idea of wisdom as a divine gift.[16] Crawford Toy appeals to a variant reading in the Septuagint (LXX) as a warrant for

[16] See, for example, Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 16; Crawford Howell Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, ICC (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1899), 36; Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC

a synonymous reading of the two lines. Instead of the MT's מפיו in 2:6b, the LXX has προσώπου αὐτοῦ (מפניו). Toy translates the LXX variant as "from his presence." As such, the MT's מפיו ("from his mouth") in correspondence with the LXX's "from his presence" simply means "from him."[17] Hence, both lines of Proverbs 2:6 simply indicate that God is the source of wisdom. This interpretation does not attribute any particular significance to the MT's "from his mouth."

In the same vein, Fox specifically rejects reading Proverbs 2:6b as a reference to "verbal revelation," arguing instead that it refers to the "endowment (the gifting of) an individual with the spirit of wisdom or the communication principles not verbally or directly but via the human spirit of wisdom."[18] In other words, Fox reads 2:6b as a divine endowment of wisdom through human agency while rejecting any conception of verbal revelation or inspiration. First, Fox dismisses that verbal revelation is in view by extending the notion of the divine gifting in 2:6a to 2:6b via an ellipsis: "from his mouth [he gives] knowledge and good sense." Fox acknowledges that his rendering of the text is uncertain since the concept of gifting from one's mouth is unique here.[19] However, in his textual note on the same verse, citing Toy's use of the LXX's "from his presence/face [מפניו]," Fox argues that מפיו and מפניו are interchangeable synonyms.[20] By considering these as synonyms, Fox subsumes the meaning of מפיו under מפינו and renders both to

(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 59; Dave Bland, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, College Press NIV Commentary: Old Testament Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002), 67.

[17] Toy, *Commentary on Proverbs*, 36.

[18] Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 114.

[19] Christine Yoder, however, points out that God's mouth is responsible for a variety of things in the OT. It "declares what is sure (e.g., Isa 1:20; 40:5; 45:23), exhales the life-breath (Ps 33:6), and speaks the sustaining word (Deut 8:3) as well as gives the human knowledge and understanding." Christine Roy Yoder, *Proverbs*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 26–27.

[20] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 373.

mean "from him."[21] Hence, Fox's translation of 2:6b emphasizes divine endowment without a hint of verbal revelation or inspiration: "at his behest come knowledge and good sense." Hence, Fox maintains that the concept of the endowment of sapiential ability is in view here.[22] As evidence that wisdom is not derived from divine verbal communication—that is, to indicate that the divine gift of wisdom does not entail the gifting of words—, Fox further cites Job 22:22 (in which Eliphaz exhorts Job to receive instruction from God's mouth), Job 32:8 (in which Elihu asserts that it is God's spirit/breath in man that gives understanding), and Egyptian wisdom.[23] Lastly, though Fox grants that Agur is referring to divine verbal communication in 30:6, he contends that Agur is referring to the revealed Torah and not to wisdom's words.[24]

Besides, Fox's prioritizing of human agency in his reading of Proverbs 2:1–4 affects his interpretation of verse 6. Underscoring the significance of human diligence in seeking wisdom (vv. 1–4), Fox states that verse 6 provides the rationale for how the human pursuit of wisdom produces "religious understanding," which is a "mature, rational piety"—a piety Fox deduces from verse 5.[25] That one's pursuit of wisdom can efficaciously lead to such rational piety is only possible because God is the source of wisdom. It appears that Fox does account for divine agency. But his interpretation prioritizes human agency over divine agency. Fox asserts that God is "ultimately" the one who gives wisdom. Elsewhere, Fox employs the language of God as the ultimate source

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[21] Fox clarifies his position in his textual commentary. See Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition with Introduction and Textual Commentary*, The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition, vol. 1 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 93.

[22] See also Arndt Meinhold, *Die Sprüche* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1991), 65.

[23] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 114.

[24] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 114.

[25] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 114.

of wisdom[26] in contradistinction to God as the total cause of wisdom[27] in order to accommodate genuine human agency and avoid an occasionalist conclusion. But as I have discussed in chapter 4, there is no rational or exegetical necessity to relegate God to being only the ultimate cause and not the total cause in order to account for genuine human agency.

It is important to point out that against Fox and Toy's reading of the LXX with the MT, the MT's witness to מפיו is superior to the LXX's and is supported by the Syriac Peshitta; the Greek Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion; and the Aramaic Targum.[28] Franz Delitzsch may be right to suggest that the LXX translator erroneously read מפיו as מפניו.[29] Moreover, as Loader points out, the lack of a waw-consecutive in Proverbs 2:6b makes the extension of the concept of gifting via ellipsis unlikely.[30] In other words, 2:6b is not simply repeating the theme of giving. As we have seen in chapter 4, the construction "מן plus a nominalized reference to God" in the first position of the second line can clarify, extend, or elaborate the idea of the first line (e.g., Prov 16:1; 16:33; 19:14; 29:26). Hence, מפיו דעת ותבונה can further clarify, extend, or elaborate how wisdom is given. Furthermore, it is unlikely that מפיו connotes the meaning of "God's breath" since פה frequently refers to speech in Proverbs. Speech is denoted with אמר in construct with פה (e.g., 4:5; 5:7; 6:2; 7:24; 8:8). פה also serves as a metonym for speech, such as in Proverbs 12:6: "The words [דבר] of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the

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[26] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 148.

[27] Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 607.

[28] Peshitta: ܦܘܡܐ ("mouth"); Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion: στοματος; Targum: פומיה.

[29] Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*, trans. M. G. Easton, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1874), 77.

[30] J. A. Loader, *Proverbs 1–9*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 117.

mouth [פה] of the upright delivers them" (cf. 10:31; 11:9; 12:14; 15:2; 16:23).[31] It follows that there are good reasons to think that the bestowal of wisdom via divine speech is in view in Proverbs 2:6.

In contrast to Fox, Bruce Waltke argues for the verbal inspiration of wisdom's words: Israel's sages claim "inspiration and authority along with Moses and his prophetic successors," even though the manner of inspiration differs from prophetic inspiration.[32] Waltke understands מפיו ("from his mouth") as "an anthropomorphism that suggests that the father's mouth is a surrogate for God's mouth (2:1)."[33] Here, Waltke perceives a correspondence between the father's words and the mouth of God (see figure 2):

- The father's words (v. 1) lead to wisdom and understanding (vv. 2, 3).
- Words, wisdom, and understanding lead to knowledge of God (v. 5).
- The mouth of God (v. 6) leads to wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

Figure 2. Correspondence between the father's words and the mouth of God (Waltke)

Hence, both the father's words and the mouth of God are considered as the source of wisdom. The identification of the father's words with God's mouth leads Waltke to conclude that verbal inspiration of the father's words is in view here. Accordingly, the "father's mouth is a surrogate for God's mouth."[34]

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[31] פה can also connote the sense of an appetite, as in Prov 16:29.

[32] Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 224.

[33] Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 224.

[34] Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 224.

While it is plausible that the identification of the father's words with the mouth of God implies verbal inspiration, Waltke's suggestion that the father serves as a surrogate for God's mouth appears premature since Proverbs does not explain how the father's words correspond with God's mouth. Arndt Meinhold's suggestion that "dem Weisen wird die Eingebung zuteil, deren Inhalt er in Worte zu fassen versucht" ("the wise man receives the inspiration, of which the content he puts into words") is even more specific about the process of inspiration. Still, Meinhold clearly places the accent on human agency.[35] His conception of inspiration can be inferred from Proverbs' Solomonic ascriptions (Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1) and the divine gift of wisdom by the setting of wisdom into Solomon's mind (1 Kgs 10:24; cf. 3:12; 4:29). However, while giving prominence to Solomon's wisdom and wise actions, the narrator underscores the priority of divine agency: "they perceived that the wisdom of God was in his inner parts [בקרבו] to do justice" (1 Kgs 3:28).

As we have seen in our discussion of Wolterstorff's model of divine discourse and Deuteronomy's theology of communication, even when direct supervision of the discourser is not discernible, it is still possible to count a human discourse as a divine discourse by the identification of human words with the voice of God (in Proverbs: the mouth of God). Whether the verbal inspiration of wisdom's words is evident from the text does not serve as a defeater for the claim that wisdom functions as a divine discourse. Hence, it is possible to claim that wisdom is a divine discourse through the father's (the sage's) speech acts in Proverbs 1–9, which, by extension, also implicates the reading of the rest of the book of Proverbs in the same way.

Furthermore, as we have seen briefly, the question of the relationship between human and divine agency is also wrapped up in the interpretation of Proverbs 2:6. When divine speech is understood solely as prophetic "verbal revelation" (in which humans can

[35] Meinhold, *Die Sprüche*, 65.

only be passive recipients of revelation), the suggestion that wisdom is a form of divine speech does not cohere well with wisdom's emphasis on human agency. Fox clearly emphasizes an optimistic anthropology as depicted in Proverbs 2:1–4 and underscores the importance of human agency in his reading of 2:6b: "It refers to the endowment of *an individual* with the spirit of wisdom or the communication of principles not verbally or directly but via the *human spirit of wisdom*."[36] In contrast to Fox, Waltke underscores the inability of the "son" to grasp wisdom, which God can only bestow.[37] So, the differing interpretations of Proverbs 2:6 entail the question of whether anthropological optimism or pessimism is deemed central to Proverbs 2.

It appears that Waltke might have overstated his anthropological pessimism. The repeated injunctions in 2:1–5 to seek wisdom do presume the potentiality of success. Fox is right that verse 6 does not deny the necessity of humans' striving after wisdom but qualifies that such success can only come about from divine endowment. But one must also raise a question against Fox's anthropological optimism: Why must the necessity of human striving be stated at the expense of relegating divine agency to the margins?

It is important to note that wisdom is never said to be found by the son in Proverbs 2:1–5.[38] The fruit of wisdom's pursuit in the protasis of verse 5 is the fear of the LORD and the knowledge of God.[39] As Zoltán Schwáb has rightly argued, that seeking wisdom results in the fear of YHWH and the knowledge of God renders God as central to Proverbial wisdom, making God "the highest end in Proverbs."[40] The human pursuit of

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[36] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 113 (italics mine).

[37] Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 223.

[38] Cf. Zoltán S. Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of the Book of Proverbs: Selfishness and Secularity Reconsidered*, JTISup (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 133.

[39] Fox acknowledges that "the combination of fear and knowledge is the apex of *ḥokmah*, 'the highest degree of wisdom and Torah,' in Ibn Yaḥyah's words." Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 112.

[40] As Schwáb has argued against those who perceive wisdom as eudaemonistic. See Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 128–59.

wisdom with the lofty goal of knowing and fearing God is only possible "because" (as Waltke rightly emphasizes the כי in 2:6a) God is the bestower of the wisdom pursued by the student. This interpretation is not too different from Fox's understanding. Still, the accent is on divine agency in the bestowal of wisdom instead of upon the human spirit of wisdom.

In other words, Proverbs 2:1–6 presents a paradox between human effort and divine bestowal: the human pursuit of wisdom is necessary even though wisdom must be divinely bestowed. This paradox is consistent with our earlier exploration of the Yahwistic passages in Proverbs. We noted that humans are deemed causally efficacious, though limited, agents who are no less dependent on divine providence for acquiring wisdom.[41] When divine concursus is acknowledged as the operative theological framework of Proverbs, over and against a modernist dichotomy of divine and human agency, there is no problem in accepting the explicit claim that the divine initiative in the gifting of wisdom is compatible with the human pursuit of wisdom. As we have seen in chapter 4, even the priority of divine agency in the gift of wisdom is compatible with a secondary attribution to human striving.

The Shaping of Desires in Proverbs

It is also important to note that Proverbs does not leave human agents to their own determination to seek out wisdom. As Anne Stewart has demonstrated, "Proverbs is not simply a catalog of good and bad desires, but rather the book participates in shaping the desires of its student as it patterns various desires throughout the poems and proverbial sayings."[42] Accordingly, the father's appeal to seek out wisdom in Proverbs

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[41] As Duane Garrett puts it, "The theological discernment of vv. 5–8 is specifically the ability to see God's care for his people. The fool sees no evidence of this, but the one who is wise understands that God gives success and protection to the pious." Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 75.

[42] Anne W. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 145.

2:1–4 is part of Proverbs' pedagogical strategy to shape the desires of its students—an integral part of Proverbs' goal for character formation.

That the paternal exhortation in 2:1–8 is part of an overall strategy of shaping students' desire is seen from corresponding appeals in Proverbs 4:1–6.[43] The conditional statements of 2:1–8 are restated as appeals in the imperative mood (see table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Prov 2:1–8 and 4:1–6

Prov 2:1–8	**Prov 4:1, 5–6**
2:1 My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you,	**4:1–2** Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight [בינה], for I give you good precepts [לקח]; do not forsake my teaching [תורה].
2:2 making your ear attentive to wisdom [חכמה] and inclining your heart to understanding [תבונה]; **2:3** yes, if you call out for insight [בינה] and raise your voice for understanding [תבונה], **2:4** if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures,	**4:5** Get wisdom [חכמה]; get insight [בינה]; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. **4:6** Do not forsake her,
2:7 he [the LORD] stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, **2:8** guarding [נצר] the paths of justice and watching over [שמר] the way of his saints.	and she will watch over [שמר] you; love her, and she will guard [נצר] you.

Besides the sage's account of being taught by his own father (4:3–4), the order of instructions in 4:1–6 parallels that of 2:1–8. In both cases, the appeals (in their varied forms of conditional statements) to seek and pursue wisdom are preceded by calls for a receptiveness toward the father's instructions. However, in 4:5–6, wisdom is reified in terms of a relationship between a man and a woman. It transforms the language of wisdom's pursuit into the language of a man's utmost value of his wife.[44] This shift in

[43] Cf. Meinhold, *Die Sprüche*, 89.

[44] Meinhold, *Die Sprüche*, 91.

language foregrounds the relational appeal of personified wisdom in Proverbs 7–9 and prepares the scene for the confrontation between two competing forces of appeal for the student's desires, namely, wisdom and folly. Wisdom is again personified in 4:6 as she assumes YHWH's role (as depicted in 2:8) as guardian. By 4:8, wisdom is no longer just an object of pursuit but has become the beloved who is worthy of pursuit.[45] The student is exhorted to offer up his deepest affection by loving (אהבה), cherishing (סלסלה), and embracing (תחבקנה) wisdom! These exhortations are motivated by accenting the desirability of wisdom, who reciprocates the motion of her lovers with an endowment of honor and dignity (4:8–9).[46] Therefore, the restatements of the conditionals in 2:1–4 as imperatives in 4:5–8 suggest that human agency must be aided by wisdom's admonitions. The student needs to seek wisdom, but the desire for wisdom is itself shaped by wisdom.[47]

In short, Proverbs depicts the student of wisdom as a desiring subject whose desires need to be directed rightly toward wisdom and everything that wisdom values, over and against the student's tendency toward misdirected desires. As Christine Yoder points out, desires do not only emanate from the subject and push for satisfaction toward an object, but the object of desire also pulls the subject's desire into its being.[48] When desires are directed rightly toward wisdom, the "desire for wisdom," writes Yoder, "empowers one's moral agency."[49] Hence, Proverbs "characterizes the moral self as

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[45] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 154–55.

[46] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 155.

[47] As Stewart rightly point out, not only must wisdom direct the student's desire to the right object (wisdom), wisdom must also direct the student's desire away from folly—which is a theme elaborated in Prov 7–9. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 158–61.

[48] Christine Roy Yoder, "The Shaping of Erotic Desire in Proverbs 1–9," in *Saving Desire: The Seduction of Christian Theology*, ed. F. Leron Shults and Jan-Olav Henrikson (Grand Rapids: Eerdsmann, 2011), 150.

[49] Yoder, "Shaping of Erotic Desire," 155.

dependent and independent, as susceptible and accountable."[50] Similarly, that "the objects that one desires, which are external to the self, participate in shaping that self" advances what Stewart terms an "educated moral selfhood."[51] Accordingly, "the moral self is formed by both internal and external agency."[52] Stewart does not view external influences as opposed to an internal (self) agency in Kantian terms. She aptly describes moral anthropology that aligns more with the book of Proverbs than with modernist epistemology.

In summary, the divine bestowal of wisdom through the words of the sage's instruction is compatible with a conception of human agency that is efficacious but limited and dependent. The identification of the father's (sages') words with the mouth of God is both exegetically sound and theologically compatible. In Proverbs 2:6 lies an explicit identification of the sage's words contained in the "book" of Proverbs as God's voice—as divine discourse. If Agur's oracle in 30:5–6 is a further assertion to take Proverbs as the "sayings of God" (אמרת אלוה), then it would reinforce our conception of wisdom as a divine discourse in 2:6.[53] However, even if 30:5–6 is a reference to the revelation of the Torah,[54] it does not follow that, as Schipper suggests, Agur aims to subvert Proverbial wisdom with a more superior verbal revelation.[55] Such an interpretation assumes a conflict between verbal revelation and wisdom on the one hand and between divine and human agency on the other. As we shall see below, wisdom's Torah-likeness can be read as Proverbs' self-assertion of wisdom as a divine discourse.

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[50] Yoder, "Shaping of Erotic Desire," 157.

[51] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 167.

[52] See Stewart's discussion of various models of moral agency. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 97–101.

[53] See Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 224; Kynes, *Obituary*, 238.

[54] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 114.

[55] According to Schipper, "The wisdom of the wise men (חכמים) is labelled as something that has to be seen as a disrespect of the divine word." Schipper, "Wisdom Is Not Enough," 69.

Wisdom's Torah-Likeness

That wisdom and Torah share an affinity of ideas and vocabularies despite the fact of the perspicuous absence of important Torah-themes in the wisdom literature has been observed by different scholars.[56] Pan-sapientialization and pan-Deuteronomism are two prominent approaches to describing the connections between biblical texts.[57] Both approaches aim to ascribe the provenance of biblical texts to either wisdom or Deuteronomistic influences. These approaches presume the existence of independent, self-contained sets of thought, worldview, or theology particular to either the wisdom movement or the Deuteronomic movement in ancient Israelite history.

Recently, the scholarly consensus of what constitutes the theological or conceptual distinctiveness of these movements has been questioned and debated.[58] These debates questioned whether scholars should continue viewing wisdom and Deuteronomic teachings as self-contained units of Israelite thought. They also raise important questions on whether any alleged direction of textual influence that rests on either wisdom or Deuteronomistic thought could be a matter of scholarly construct. Furthermore, that the affinities in vocabularies and concepts could simply be owed to a widespread familiarity of both wisdom and Deuteronomistic texts already in circulation renders the diachronic adjudications of the direction of dependence difficult.[59] In light of these challenges, it

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[56] Essential Torah-themes—such as revelatory content, the patriarchs, Israel's covenant with YHWH, the Decalogue and the legal stipulations revealed at Sinai, Israel's election as God's people, and YHWH's salvific act of Israel—are notably absent in the book of Proverbs. For some examples of scholars who note the affinities between wisdom and the Torah texts, see Franz-Josef Steiert, *Die Weisheit Israels—ein Fremdkörper im Alten Testament? eine Untersuchung zum Buch der Sprüche auf dem Hintergrund der ägyptischen Weisheitslehren*, Freiburger theologische Studien 143 (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1990), 229–45; S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Meridian Library (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 396; Delitzsch, *Proverbs of Solomon*, 1:34. For a summary of scholars who perceive such affinities, see Dell, *Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 155–87.

[57] Kynes, *Obituary*, 36–55.

[58] On the problems of pan-Deuteronomism, see Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, JSOTSup 268 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1999). On the problems of pan-sapientialism, see Sneed, ed., *Was There a Wisdom Tradition?*, xi, 325. Kynes has provided a helpful discussion on genre theories and the problems of both pan-sapientialism and pan-Deuteronomism. See Kynes, *Obituary*, 25–59.

[59] Kynes, *Obituary*, 56.

seems best to treat wisdom's Torah-likeness as well as intertextual connections with non-wisdom texts as matters of canonical intertextuality, whereby the awareness of the constellations of textual affinities is borne out of texts within the "canonical universe."[60] Such canonical intertextuality is preferred over any *a priori* dismissals of the possible connections between canonical texts.

The approach of choice in this dissertation is a theological-canonical one, anchored on the God who has created the heavens and the earth and has spoken to Israel at Sinai. As Duane Garrett states, "The most important point of contact" between wisdom and other biblical texts is that "YHWH, the maker of heaven and earth, is the one God who chose Israel and who is the source of all wisdom."[61] As we have seen, both wisdom and Torah claim to originate from God. Though wisdom scholars might dispute the presence of divine speech in Proverbs, none that I know of avows that the divine speeches in the rest of the OT are mere fabrications. It is reasonable to assume that the attributes of the divine Torah and divine speeches in the OT reflect an accurate portrayal of the nature of the divine voice. Hence, the affinities between the attributes of wisdom, Torah, and divine speeches indicate an accurate portrayal of God as their common source.

Psalm 119 and Proverbs

Since Psalm 119 and Proverbs 8 are considered to be hymns exalting Torah and wisdom, respectively, it is interesting to note the similarities of the attributes ascribed to them.[62] Both wisdom and Torah share an ancient origin (Ps 119:52; Prov 8:23); they

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[60] See Kynes's discussion on "The Universe of Texts." Kynes, *Obituary*, 108–45.

[61] Duane A. Garrett, *The Problem of the Old Testament: Hermeneutical, Schematic, and Theological Approaches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 167.

[62] For analyses of the similarities between Ps 119 and Proverbs, see also David Noel Freedman, *Psalm 119: The Exaltation of Torah*, Biblical and Judaic Studies From the University of California, San Diego, vol. 6 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 89; Kent A. Reynolds, *Torah as Teacher: The Exemplary Torah Student in Psalm 119*, VTSup 137 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 51–52; Bernd U.

are "from of old" (מעלם). However, there are no indications that the Torah, in contrast to wisdom, existed prior to the creation of the world in Psalm 119. Just as YHWH's Torah is truth (Ps 119:142, 151, 160), so also wisdom's mouth "will utter truth" (Prov 8:7). Just as all of YHWH's commandments are right (Ps 119:172), so also all of the words of wisdom's mouth are righteous (Prov 8:8). Both wisdom and Torah are described as more valuable than either gold or silver (Ps 119:72, 127; Prov 8:10, 19). Also, both wisdom and Torah result in blessings for those who keep their ways (Ps 119:1; Prov 8:32). Elsewhere, the sage's commandment is said to be a lamp (נר) and his Torah a light (אור) (Prov 6:23), just as YHWH's word (דברך) is said to be a lamp and a light for the psalmist (Ps 119:105). The ascription of similar attributes to both wisdom and Torah suggests that wisdom also shares the same quality of Torah as divine discourse.

Besides the similarities in the attributes of wisdom and Torah, there are also similarities in the reception of wisdom and Torah.[63] The sage exhorts the student to "store up [תצפן] my commandments with you" (Prov 2:1), just as the psalmist declares that "in my heart, I stored up [צפנתי] your word" (Ps 119:11). In Proverbs 2:2, the sage exhorts the student to "incline" his heart to understanding (תטה לבך לתבונה); likewise, in Psalm 119:36, the psalmist beseeches God to "incline my heart to your testimonies (הט־לבי אל־עדותיך).

According to Schipper, despite the similarities in attributes and reception between Torah and wisdom in Psalm 119 and Proverbs, their differences could suggest that the psalmist intends to subvert wisdom by attributing all that is said of wisdom to Torah instead of ascribing all that is said of Torah to wisdom.[64] While this interpretation

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Schipper, *Hermeneutik der Tora: Studien zur Traditionsgeschichte von Prov. 2 und zur Komposition von Prov. 1–9*, BZAW 432 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 114–20.

[63] Reynolds, *Torah as Teacher*, 52.

[64] In Schipper's words, "Man hat den Eindruck, als ob der Autor von Ps 119 einen bewussten Kontrapunkt zu weisheitlichen Texten setzt, indem er das, was dort der Weisheit zugesprochen wird, auf die Tora bezieht . . . . Wenn die These zutrifft, dass Ps 119 das Proverbienbuch und damit auch Prov 2 voraussetzt, so erhält die für Ps 119 und Prov 8 genannte These der Kontrastierung zwischen Tora und

is possible, it is unlikely. This interpretation depends, as Schipper admits, on the thesis that Psalm 119 presumes upon and reacts to the statements about wisdom in Proverbs 2 and 8.[65] However, as Kent Reynolds has argued, textual dependence is difficult to prove.[66] It seems better to assume that the affinities between Psalm 119 and Proverbs 2 are observable to modern readers due to canonical intertextuality. More significantly, when determining the relationship between wisdom and Torah in Proverbs and Psalm 119, Schipper introduces a false dilemma between wisdom and Torah—that we must choose between wisdom or Torah stems from the assumption that wisdom and Torah cannot exist side by side. That nowhere in Psalm 119 explicitly denounces wisdom weakens Schipper's claim. As Reynolds and David Noel Freedman have argued, that Psalm 119 employs the locutions of wisdom (e.g., vv. 24 and 98)[67] might suggest a parallel between wisdom and Torah.[68] As such, Schipper's argument appears to stem from a false dilemma between wisdom and Torah. Instead, reading Proverbs with Psalm 119 might suggest an affinity between wisdom and Torah. Hence, the reading of Proverbs

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Weisheit eine weitere Facette. Denn dann würde Ps 119 gleichsam gegen ein Weisheitsverständnis Position beziehen, bei dem die Weisheit für sich beansprucht, was die Tora zu leisten vermag." Schipper, *Hermeneutik der Tora*, 118, 119.

[65] According to Schipper, "Prov 8 und Prov 2 wären dann von der Perspektive des Verfassers von Ps 119 aus auf einer ebene anzusiedeln, da beide Texte das geradezu ungeheuerliche selbstverständnis der Weisheit dokumentieren, das zu leisten, was in der Torakonzeption auf die Zukunft bezogen ist." Schipper, *Hermeneutik der Tora*, 119.

[66] See Reynolds, *Torah as Teacher*, 51–52.

[67] Ps 119:24 ("Your testiomnies are my delight; they are my counselors"); Ps 119:98 ("Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me"). For an in-depth look at wisdom's vocabulary in Ps 119, see Avi Hurvitz, "Wisdom Vocabulary in the Hebrew Psalter: A Contribution to the Study of 'Wisdom Psalms'," *VT* 38, no. 1 (1988): 41–51. See also Reynolds's discussion. Reynolds, *Torah as Teacher*, 49–56.

[68] Adapting Fox's understanding of wisdom as a universal, Reynolds states that like wisdom, "Torah exists independently of human minds and is unbounded by space, since it is established in the heavens. Torah is somehow active in the realm of nature, since the heavens and earth stand by it. The many requests for insight confirm that Torah must be accessed, understood, and then obeyed. Torah will last forever, and it is apprehended by intellect not sensory perception. Torah exists objectively; it is not a mental construct." Reynolds, *Torah as Teacher*, 135. Freedman states that "Psalm 119 gives tôrâ virtually the status of a divine hypostasis, like wisdom (*ḥokmâ*) in Proverbs 8." Freedman, *The Exaltation of Torah*, 89.

2 and 8 in relation to Psalm 119 provides a canonical perspective that wisdom and Torah stand side by side as authoritative divine discourses.

Deuteronomy and Proverbs

The affinities between Proverbs and Deuteronomy have been noted by various scholars. Though writing on a different matter, Delitzsch notes that the "whole poetry" of Proverbs 1–9 "savors of the Book of Deuteronomy . . . . As Deuteronomy seeks to bring home and seal upon the heart of the people the תּוֹרָה of the Mosaic law, so do they the תּוֹרָה of the Solomonic proverbs."[69] According to Schipper, the affinities between Proverbs 3:1–5, 6:20–24, and 7:1–5 with Deuteronomy 6:6–8 and 11:18–21 are as follows.[70] First, the Proverbs passages employ תורה and מצוה to refer to parental instructions:

Prov 3:1	בני תורתי אל־תשׁכח ומצותי יצר לבך׃	My son, do not forget my torah, and let your heart keep my commandments.
Prov 6:20	נצר בני מצות אביך ואל־תטשׁ תורת אמך׃	Keep, my son, the commandments of your father, and do not forsake the torah of your mother.
Prov 7:1	בני שׁמר אמרי ומצותי תצפן אתך׃	My son, guard my words and store my commandments with you.
Prov 7:2	שׁמר מצותי וחיה ותורתי כאישׁון עיניך׃	Keep my commandments and live; and [keep] my torah as the pupil of your eye.

Second, the Proverbs passages share similar ideas on the reception of the parental torah (7:1–2 only mentions מצוה and not תורה), such as to bind/tie it to one's heart/neck and to inscribe (כתב) it on the tablet of one's heart:

Prov 3:3	חסד ואמת אל־יעזבך קשׁרם על־גרגרותיך כתבם עלוח לבך׃	Let not faithfulness and truth forsake you; bind them upon your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.

[69] Delitzsch, *Proverbs of Solomon*, 1:34.

[70] Schipper, "Wisdom Is Not Enough," 59.

Prov 6:21	קשׁרם על־לבך תמיד ענדם על־ גרגרתך׃	Bind them upon your heart always; tie them on your neck.
Prov 7:3	קשׁרם על־אצבעתיך כתבם עללוח לבך׃	Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.

Third, Deuteronomy 6 and 11 share a number of vocabularies and ideas with the aforementioned three collections of Proverbial instructions.

Deut 6:6	והיו הדברים האלה אשׁר אנכי מצוך היום על לבבך	And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart.
Deut 6:7	ושׁננתם לבניך ודברת בם בשׁבתך בביתך ובלכתך בדרך ובשׁכבך ובקומך	You shall teach them to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on your way and when you lie down and when you rise up.
Deut 6:8	וקשׁרתם לאות על ידך והיו לטטפת בין עיניך	Bind them as signs on your hand and let them be as frontlets between your eyes.
Deut 6:9	וכתבתם על מזוזת ביתך	And write them upon the doorposts of your house.

Notably, Deuteronomy 6:6 identifies the subject matter as words commanded (root: צוה) by Moses that shall be upon your heart (על לבבך). Schipper notes that 6:6 shares Proverbs' concern that the parental teaching in the form of commandments is inscribed (כתבם) upon the heart. He underscores the significance of the affinities by pointing out that "the combination of קשׁר and כתב is used in the whole of the Hebrew Bible only in these four texts: Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18 and Proverbs 3:3; 7:3."[71] Schipper concludes that these affinities prove that Proverbs 3, 6, 7 allude to the passages in Deuteronomy and states, "By this intertextual allusion, the מצוה of the father and the תורה of the mother comes close to the תורה and the מצות of God. Even if they appear in the textual strategy of Proverbs as a parental instruction, this instruction refers to the will of YHWH."[72]

[71] Schipper, "Wisdom Is Not Enough," 60.

[72] Schipper, "Wisdom is Not Enough," 60.

Gerlinde Baumann came to a similar conclusion earlier by arguing that מצוה in the plural with a suffix and תורה in the singular with a suffix, apart from a couple of exceptions (Ps 78:1; Jer 35:18), always refer to YHWH as the subject in the OT outside of Proverbs. That these are never found to explicitly refer to YHWH in Proverbs but to the teacher suggests to Baumann that their occurrences are meant to "override or blur the boundary between human and divine commandments" ("die Grenze zwischen menschlichen und göttlichen Geboten überschreiten bzw. Verwischen").[73] Furthermore, Baumann contends that a "functional analogy" (*Funktionsanalogie*) can be drawn between the wisdom figure in Proverbs 1–9 and the Torah in Deuteronomy. Just as Deuteronomy frames and bundles together all of the laws and their paraenesis under the Mosaic Torah, the wisdom figure in Proverbs 1–9 frames and bundles together the whole collection of wisdom sayings in Proverbs.[74] Along similar lines, Roland Murphy writes, "If Prov 1–9 is the 'introduction' to the collections of individual sayings that follow, this powerful motivating figure [Lady Wisdom] sweeps all the practical wisdom of Israel into the orbit of her activity."[75] Baumann notes the parallel between the reception of wisdom in Proverbs and the reception of YHWH's commandments in Deuteronomy. In Proverbs, a loving relationship is directed at the wisdom figure and not at her commands. Her commands are to be obeyed, while she is to be loved by the student of wisdom. This, argues Baumann, is analogous to Deuteronomy's conception of loving YHWH and obeying his commandments. As such, "the figure of wisdom thus forms the equivalent of

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[73] Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1–9*, 296.

[74] Baumann argues that despite the fact that מצוה, תורה, and חכמה do not occur together in one verse in Prov 1–9, their equivalence is deduced from the fact that they share the same consequences of obedience consisting in a successful and long life. Hence, from the perspective of the consequences, "observing the commandments has the same relevance as listening to the wisdom figure (*die gleiche Relevanz hat wie das Hören auf die Weisheitsgestalt*)." Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1–9*, 297–98.

[75] Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 137.

YHWH in terms of the relationship with people."[76] Seen from the perspective of wisdom's identification with (not as) the Torah, the suffixed uses of תורה and מצוה in Proverbs 1–9 thus enjoy equal status with YHWH's commandments and instructions.[77] In short, the identification of wisdom and Torah made explicit in Sirach 24:23 is in accord with Proverbial wisdom's own assertion of its divine status.[78]

Fox objects to Baumann's appeal to the grammatical forms of מצוה and תורה by pointing out that Baumann wrongly deduces theological conclusions from the "incidental grammatical phenomenon."[79] For Fox, the exceptions (Ps 78:1; Jer 35:18) suffice to prove the rule that theological conclusions cannot be drawn from the grammatical phenomenon. Fox contends that "even if Prov 1–9 is appropriating some of the terminologies of Deuteronomy, the author is not equating obedience to God with obedience to wisdom."[80] However, contrary to Fox, as seen above, Baumann is making theological conclusions not solely on the basis of the grammatical phenomenon but also by the analogy between the Deuteronomic Torah and Proverbial wisdom. In my judgment, Baumann's arguments can be further strengthened by taking into consideration the parallels between wisdom and Torah's locution in Psalm 119 as well as Deuteronomy's theology of communication.

First, Psalm 119 employs several synonyms to explicate the concept of the Torah: אמרה ("saying"), דבר ("word"), חק ("statute"), מצוה ("commandment"), משׁפט ("judgment"), עדות ("testimony"), and פקודים ("precepts"). As Freedman has argued, the

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[76] Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1–9*, 298.

[77] Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1–9*, 299.

[78] Von Rad states that "the complete identification of wisdom with the Torah is an accomplished fact with ben Sirach. But this was certainly no absolute innovation, for in the light of this later sages thought this equation has to be regarded as simply a theological conclusion already latent in principle in Prov. I-IX and now come to maturity." Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper, 1962), 1:445.

[79] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 79.

[80] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 79.

eight words (the seven synonyms plus תורה) correspond with an eightfold acrostic pattern within the psalm to depict the "inexhaustibility of tôrâ."[81] That the synonyms are employed more or less interchangeably throughout the psalm serves to elaborate the central theme of Torah—YHWH.[82] The frequency of these synonyms is roughly equally distributed around twenty times in the psalm.[83] In these instances, the plural form of מצוה shares the same prominence with others as synonyms for the divine Torah. Similarly, מצוה occurs in parallel with the word תורה in Proverbs 3:1; 6:20, 23; 7:2. Considering that מצוה is synonymous with תורה in Psalm 119, the juxtaposition of מצוה with תורה in Proverbs suggests that the wisdom shares Torah's locutions as authoritative divine discourse. Elsewhere in Proverbs 1–9, מצוה stands parallel with אמר (2:1; 7:1) and דבר (4:4)—both of which are synonyms of the divine Torah in Psalm 119 (though the form is אמרה in Ps 119).[84] As such, wisdom's instruction shares words commonly associated with the Torah in Psalm 119.

Second, Deuteronomy's theology of communication can further shed light on the nature of wisdom in Proverbs. Resembling Deuteronomy's language, the sages exhort the student to "write" their teachings "upon the tablet of your heart" (כתבם על לוח לבך; Prov 3:3; 7:3)" As Jean-Pierre Sonnet has argued, there is an association of the writing of the Torah words (דברים) with the metaphor of the heart in Proverbs 6:6–9.[85] The words that Moses was commanding Israel at Moab (as indicated by the time-indicator היום) shall be upon Israel's heart through a combination of teaching and repetition (v. 7), the making

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[81] Freedman, *The Exaltation of Torah*, 25–55, 89.

[82] Freedman, *The Exaltation of Torah*, 91.

[83] *'imrā* 19 times; *dābār* 22 times; *ḥōq* 22 times, *miṣwâ* 22 times; *mišpāt* 23 times; *'ēdôt* 23 times; *piqqûd* 21 times; *tôrâ* 25 times. See Freedman, *The Exaltation of Torah*, 35.

[84] Proverbs does offer *musâr* as another synonym of Torah (Prov 1:8) that is unmentioned in Ps 119.

[85] Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *The Book within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy*, BibInt 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 55.

of amulets by an inscription (v. 8),[86] and the writing of the Torah texts on the doorposts and gates (v. 9).[87] The metaphor of writing wisdom's instructions upon one's heart in Proverbs 3:3 and 7:3 echoes Deuteronomy's way of securing sacred teachings into human hearts through education and writing.

Written texts facilitate memorization. As Sonnet points out, the exhortation to write out the commandments of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:6–9 presumes the existence of a prior written text—either the written tablets of the Decalogue or, more likely due to the reversion to Moses's present time, the written Mosaic Torah. "The internalization of the revealed words of God," writes Joachim Schaper on the significance of the written Torah, "would have been impossible without the help of writing."[88]

Not only does a written text facilitate memory and internalization; so also does the re-writing (copying) of a written text. David Carr has demonstrated that the metaphor of "writing on the tablet of one's heart" conceptualizes an ancient process of education and enculturation of sacred texts that interweaves writing (and copying), orality, and memory together in an oral-written culture.[89] The command for Israel to write in Deuteronomy 6:6–9 is an act of re-writing what has been written and given to them. As such, Israel writes as a "mimetic repetition" of the Torah text.[90] The writing in 6:6–9 involves the re-writing of texts from the Mosaic Torah.[91] The re-writing of a written discourse then serves as means for getting the teaching into one's heart.

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[86] As Sonnet points out, writing is implied in the making of an amulet. Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 55.

[87] The concept of writing as the means of securing permanency is also echoed in other prophetic texts (Isa 30:8; Jer 17:1; Hab 2:2).

[88] Joachim Schaper, "Theology of Writing: The Oral and the Written, God as Scribe, and the Book of Deuteronomy," in *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach*, ed. Louise Joy Lawrence and Mario I. Aguilar (Leiden: Deo, 2004), 109.

[89] David McLain Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 23, 27–29, 127–28, 285.

[90] Schaper, "Theology of Writing," 109.

[91] Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 54–55.

Arguably, a similar process for internalization of wisdom's instruction is implied in Proverbs 3:3 and 7:3. The writing of the sages' teachings on the tablet of one's heart can involve both oral and written discourse to facilitate internalization and memorization. As Fox explains, "The teachings are preserved in writing—both metaphorically in the heart and actually in wisdom literature. The written teachings are mnemonics that communicate to the pupil and remind him of his duties."[92] Furthermore, the metaphor, as Carr has argued, could well include the copying of the sages' text as an activity to internalize the proverbs into one's heart. Hence, like the Mosaic Torah, the words of the sages are to be received, learned, and transmitted through not only oral and written discourses but also the act of writing itself.

While the common thread of writing and internalization runs through both the Mosaic Torah and Proverbs, it does not necessarily suggest from this fact that Proverbs should be regarded as a sacred text. It does mean, however, that if Proverbs is indeed identified as divine discourse (Prov 2:6), then this common thread of writing and internalization is consonant with its claim to be treated like a sacred text just as the Torah is a sacred text. So, Carr relates the metaphor of writing on the table of the heart to the transmission of and cultural formation via sacred text as follows:

> The written text, whether readable by many or not, provides both an emblem of continuity and a stable means for ensuring the stability of the cultural formation into the next generation. Nevertheless, the main point, always, is to make sure that the *sacred text is written on the tablet of the heart* of those leaders who are responsible for ensuring the persistence and adaptation of the transnational social body as it moves across time.[93]

In short, wisdom shares the Deuteronomic language of the reception of Torah as a sacred text to indicate to readers who are familiar with that language to receive wisdom as a sacred text.

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[92] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 147.

[93] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 285 (italics mine).

Wisdom's Mimesis of Divine Speech

That personified wisdom speaks in a prophetic manner has been noted by various scholars. However, the observation that nowhere does wisdom speak YHWH's words often becomes a foil to the claim of her "prophetic" status.[94] As discussed above, even if wisdom does not "bear" divine revelation in the sense that she is portrayed as transmitting divine verbal communication directed at her, Deuteronomy's theology of communication provides a paradigm for thinking of non-divine speech as divine discourse by virtue of identification with and mimesis of divine discourse. Murphy suggests this identification and mimesis when he writes, "Wisdom is somehow identified with the Lord. The call of Lady wisdom is the voice of the Lord . . . . [W]isdom speaks with divine accents."[95] In this section, I will delineate how wisdom's speech is like God's speech. Since these affinities have been explored by other scholars,[96] I will offer a sketch of the similarities between wisdom and prophetic discourse. My point here is that while personified wisdom does act like a prophetess (Prov 1:20–21), personified wisdom speaks like God in the first-person address to her hearers.[97] It is the mimesis of divine discourse rather than a mimesis of prophetic function that underscores wisdom's words as divine discourse.

Proverbs 1:22–33

While modern scholars have recognized the similarities between Proverbs 1:22–33 and Jeremiah, Scott Harris has provided an extensive analysis on the affinities

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[94] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 293.

[95] Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 138, 147.

[96] Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Bible and Literature (Decatur, GA: Almond, 1985), 28; Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1–9*, 58–222.

[97] Silvia Schroer states that wisdom is a divine figure who makes her claim "by the emphatic and weighty *'ny* of the first person speeches, which calls to mind the self-presentation of YHWH . . . . From a form-critical perspective, *Ḥokmā* speaks like a deity, or like the God of Israel." Silvia Schroer, *Wisdom Has Built Her House: Studies on the Figure of Sophia in the Bible* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 27.

between Proverbs 1:22–33 and Jerermiah 7 and 20.[98] Harris argues that Proverbs reutilizes Jeremiah's discourse for sapiential purposes, which presumes a post-exilic dating of Proverbs 1–9 as the latest stratum of the book.[99] However, as Fox has noted, the post-exilic dating of Proverbs 1–9 is uncertain and difficult to prove.[100] The fact that Proverbs 1:22–33 corresponds with other prophetic texts, such a Zechariah 7:12–13, suggests that no direct textual dependence can be easily drawn.[101]

Notably, Harris finds similar vocabularies and recurring themes in Proverbs 1:22–33 in Jeremiah 7. Harris has provided a full list of eighteen similar vocabularies between the two passages,[102] such as חוץ ("street"; Prov 1:20; Jer 17:17, 34), קול ("voice"; Prov 1:20; Jer 7:28, 34), קרא ("call out"; Prov 1:21; Jer 7:2, 13), שׁער ("gate"; Prov 1:21; Jer 7:2). More significant, however, are the recurring themes shared by both passages. Chief among these is the "speaking/not hearing, and calling/not answering" theme in Jeremiah 7:13, 23–24, 25–26, 27 (cf. 35:17) and Proverbs 1:24–25. Harris further notes the pattern of rejection of Jeremiah's words that amount to YHWH's rejection of the people (Jer 7:13, 27–29). This pattern corresponds with the "speaking/not hearing and calling/not answering" pattern of Proverbs 1:24–25, 28.[103] It is important to underscore, however, that Jeremiah's words are explicitly identified as YHWH's voice (Jer 7:27–28). Hence, a slight modification of Harris's observation is needed. The pattern of concern should be the rejection of YHWH's voice, not Jeremiah's words, as amounting to YHWH's rejection of the people.

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[98] Scott L. Harris, *Proverbs 1–9: A Study of Inner-Biblical Interpretation*, SBLDS (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 67–109.

[99] Harris, *Proverbs 1–9*, 22.

[100] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 48.

[101] See Fox's critique of Harris's conclusion. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 105.

[102] Harris, *Proverbs 1–9*, 93–94.

[103] Harris, *Proverbs 1–9*, 99.

Jer 7:13 And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer . . .

Jer 7:28–29 And you shall say to them, "This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, and they did not accept discipline [מוסר] . . . , for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath."

Prov 1:24–25 Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproofs, . . .

Prov 1:28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me.

Outside of Jeremiah, similarities between personified wisdom's speech and other divine speeches can be seen. Wisdom's appeal in Proverbs 1:22 ("How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?") is similar to the "How long is X going to go on?" rhetorical questions found in YHWH's appeal to his people in the Pentateuch and the Prophets.[104] Take the following for example:

Exod 16:28	And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?"
Num 14:27	How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumblings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me.
Hos 8:5	I have spurned your calf, O Samaria. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence?

The protasis with the formulaic "יען + you have done this" in Proverbs 1:24–25 that commences wisdom's denunciation of those who reject her in a manner typical of prophetic announcements of consequences also parallels the divine speech in Numbers 20:12 and Amos 5:11.

In Proverbs 1:26–28, personified wisdom states the consequences of refusing her counsel: "I also will laugh [אשחק] at your calamity; I will mock [אלעג] when your terror comes upon you . . . . [T]hen they will call me, but I will not answer; they will

[104] Loader, *Proverbs 1–9*, 93. In Zech 1:12, the formulaic rhetorical question is addressed to God by an angel of the Lord.

search for me, but I will not be found." Christa Kayatz and Duane Garrett note the parallel between wisdom's laughing and mocking with God's laughing and mocking against the wicked in the Psalter:[105]

Ps 2:4	He who sits in the heavens laughs [ישחק]; the LORD scoffs [ילעג] at them.
Ps 37:13	But the LORD laughs [ישחק] at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming.

Just as YHWH's laughter and scoffing take place in the context of the encroaching calamities for the wicked, so too wisdom's laughter and scoffing take place when calamities strike those who forsake her. In addition, the motif of "calling and not answering, searching and not finding" recalls the motif of divine hiddenness in the Prophets:

Isa 1:15	When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.[106]
Amos 8:11–12	"Behold the days are coming," declares the LORD God, "when I will send disaster upon the land, not a hunger for bread nor of thirst for water, rather for hearing the words of the LORD. They shall roam from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of YHWH, but they will not find it."
Zech 7:13	"As I called, but they did not listen, so they will call, and I will not listen," says the LORD of hosts.

Furthermore, wisdom's speech in Proverbs 1:31 employs the metaphor of fruit to describe the consequence of one's conduct (דרק): "So they shall eat from the fruit of their way, and they shall be sated from their own devices." This, too, finds its parallel with YHWH's speech in prophetic discourse (Isa 3:10; Jer 17:10; 21:14; Mic 7:13).

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[105] Christa Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1–9: eine Form- und motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter Einbeziehung ägyptischen Vergleichsmaterials* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966), 124; Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 72.

[106] See also Deut 1:45; 1 Sam 8:18; Amos 8:11–12.

Lastly, wisdom's bold concluding declaration in Proverbs 1:33 resonates with the manner in which, paraphrasing von Rad, only YHWH would speak:[107] "But whoever listens to me will dwell securely and will be at ease from the terror of disaster." That YHWH gives peace and security to those who obey him is stated in Levitcus 25:18: "Therefore you shall do my statutes and keep my rules and do them, and then you shall dwell in the land securely." Also, that YHWH alone gives true peace over and against the false sense of ease enjoyed by those who disregard his voice is shown in the contrast between Isaiah 32:9 and 32:18.[108]

Isa 32:9	O women who are at ease, rise up, listen to my voice. O unsuspecting [בטחות] daughters, give ear to my words!
Isa 32:18	My people will dwell in a peaceful settlement, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

In summary, we can relate most of the wisdom's speech in Proverbs 1:22–33 to YHWH's speech. While no textual dependencies can be shown, we have seen that personified wisdom speaks that which YHWH speaks to his people in the OT.

Proverbs 8:4–20

We have already seen the parallels between wisdom's self-predication in Proverbs 8 with the conception of the Torah in Psalm 119. Here, I wish to highlight the similarities between wisdom's speech and YHWH's speech in prophetic discourse.

In wisdom's initial address in Proverbs 8:4–5, she does not restrict her address only to those open to her instructions but also extends her address to the simple ones (פתאים) and the fools (כסילים). In 1:22, both the simple ones and the fools (כסילים) are totally at home with their existing state: the simple loves being simple, and fools hate

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[107] In von Rad's words, "So wisdom is truly the form in which Jahweh makes himself present and in which he wishes to be sought by man. 'Whosoever finds me, finds life' (Prov. VIII. 35). Only Jahweh can speak in this way. And yet, wisdom is not Jahweh himself: it is something separate from him." Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:444.

[108] Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 213.

knowledge. Here in 8:4–5, wisdom resembles YHWH, who would extend his message and commission his prophets to give his Torah to those who are impudent and stubborn of heart (Deut 31:25–27; Isa 46:12; Ezek 2:3–5).[109]

Wisdom's declaration of her trustworthiness in Proverbs 8:7–8 fits the description of God in the "Song of Moses" in Deuteronomy 32:4–5.[110] Even though it is not a direct divine speech, the writing of the song was commanded by God as an addendum to the Mosaic Torah.[111] In Moses's song, God is described as a God of truthfulness (אמונה) without iniquity (עול), a God who is righteous (צדק) and opposed to a crooked (עקש) and twisted (פתלתל) generation (32:4–5). Wisdom portrays herself similarly—as trustworthy as God. She utters truth as opposed to wickedness; she speaks righteousness as opposed to what is twisted (פתל) and crooked (עקש). Also, wisdom's trustworthiness stands in contrast to the strange woman (נכריה) in Proverbs 7 who speaks lies with her "smooth words" (החליקה אמרי) in "the pretext of religious devotion to assuage the young man's conscience about going to her."[112] That personified wisdom calls one to simply trust in her trustworthiness (8:6–7) stands in contrast to the deceptive "smooth words" of the נכריה echoes the psalmist's denouncement of the smooth talks of the wicked on the one hand and his exhortation to trust in YHWH on the other:

> Ps 5:9, 11 — For there are no trustworthy things [נכונה] in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction [חוות]; their throat is an open grave [קבר־פתוח]; they make smooth with their tongue [לשונם יחליקון] . . . . But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.

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[109] Cf. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 268.

[110] Cf. Maurice Gilbert, "Le discours de la Sagesse en Proverbes, 8," in *La sagesse de l'Ancien Testament: [travaux présentés au Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense XXIX tenu du 29 au 31 août 1978]*, ed. Maurice Gilbert, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium 51 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979), 205; Loader, *Proverbs 1–9*, 329.

[111] See Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 165–66.

[112] Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 104; Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 377–78.

> Ps 55:20–22 My companion stretched out his hand against his friends; he violated his covenant. His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

Wisdom's trustworthiness needs no empirical justification, even though her teachings are empirically verifiable. As such, personified wisdom shares an "epistemic entitlement" with YHWH.[113]

Wisdom's declaration that "I love those who love me" (Prov 8:17) echoes YHWH's speeches elsewhere where YHWH is the subject or object of love. In the OT, the verb אהב with the first-person suffix is used with either humans (e.g., Exod 21:5; Judg 16:15; Ps 119:97, 113) or YHWH (Isa 43:4; Jer 31:3; Hos 11:1; Mal 1:2) as the subject. YHWH as the object of love is also frequently attested in the OT (e.g., Deut 5:10; 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:13, 22; 19:9; 30:20; Pss 97:10; 145:20). As Baumann has noted, it is probably significant that in the book of Proverbs, nowhere is YHWH explicitly mentioned as the object of love. Rather, wisdom and insight are the most frequently mentioned non-human object of love in Proverbs.[114] Hence, Baumann concludes that wisdom stands in YHWH's place in Proverbs.

A possible defeater to Baumann's claim is Fox's assertion that while the mutuality of divine-human love is attested in the OT, "the formula of reciprocal love is not."[115] Rather, Fox suggests, along with Kayatz, that the reciprocity of wisdom's love has a strong parallel with Egyptian sources where it is said that a deity loves those who love him/her.[116] However, against Fox's assertion, Deuteronomy 7:9–10, though not a

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[113] Epistemic entitlements "are beliefs or judgments unsupported by evidence available to the subject, but which the subject nonetheless has the epistemic right to hold." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Epistemic Entitlement," accessed April 2, 2021, https://iep.utm.edu/ep-en/. See also Wolterstorrf's discussion on the entitlement related to the claim that God speaks. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 261–80.

[114] Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1–9*, 99.

[115] Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 276.

[116] Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1–9*, 98; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 276.

direct divine speech, does communicate a reciprocity of divine love through the Mosaic Torah:

> Know that the LORD your God is the God, the faithful God, who keeps the covenant and loyal love with those who love him [לאהביו] and with those who keep his commandment, to a thousand generation, and repays those who hate him [לשׂנאיו] to his face by destroying him. He will not hesitate against those who hate him to his face; he shall repay him. (Deut 7:9–10)

Furthermore, the divine speech in 1 Samuel 2:30 closely parallels Proverbs 8:17: "For those who honor me [מכבדי] I will honor [אכבד], but those who despise me [בזי] I will make insignificant [יקלו]."[117] Therefore, it is conceivable that wisdom's claim that "I love those who love me" parallels YHWH's speech, whether directly as a citation (as in 1 Sam 2:30) or indirectly through the Mosaic Torah (Deut 7:9–10).

In Proverbs 8:18–19, wisdom claims to be the giver of riches (עשׁר) and honor (כבוד)—a prerogative ascribed to God when he gave to Solomon—who requested wisdom instead of riches (עשׁר) and long life (ימים רבים)—what he did not ask for, namely, "both riches and honor" (גם־עשׁר גם־כבוד; 1 Kgs 3:11–13; cf. 1 Chr 29:12; 2 Chr 1:12; 17:5).[118] Here, we see the motif of riches and honor's accompanying the gift of wisdom in both Proverbs 8:18–20 and 1 Kings 3:11–13. Wisdom is the giver of riches just as YHWH is the giver of both wisdom and riches.

In sum, personified wisdom speaks in such a way that resembles YHWH's speech. That personified wisdom speaks like YHWH would speak has led some to conclude that she is a foreign goddess or a hypostasis of a divine being besides Yahweh. However, in light of Israel's monotheism, there is little evidence within the book of Proverbs to suggest that Israel's sages intended the personification of wisdom to be anything more than a poetic personification of a divine attribute.[119] My assertion here is

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[117] Cf. Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 404.

[118] Cf. Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 178.

[119] For a summary and critique of prominent views on wisdom as a divine being, see Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, 352; Gerlinde Baumann, "Personified Wisdom: Contexts, Meanings,

that there is a mimesis of divine speech in wisdom's self-predication. Wisdom speaks like YHWH, even though she is not a divine being like YHWH.[120] Through the identification of wisdom's words with the sages' words, this poetic personification facilitates the conception of wisdom as a quasi-agent whose agency is seen through the genuine agency of the sages. The sages in Proverbs represent wisdom actualized.[121]

In light of Deuteronomy's theology of communication, it is no surprise that wisdom legitimizes her speech via a mimesis of divine speech even though her role in creation (Prov 8:22–31; cf. 3:19–20) serves as the primary form of legitimization in the book of Proverbs. In doing so, wisdom presents herself not only as consonant with the divine act of creation but also in concursus with the divine act of speaking. Such a concurrence indicates how wisdom and her words are divine gifts (Prov 2:6), placing the accent on divine agency while affirming her own agency through human instructions.

Wisdom's Mimesis of Divine Action

The notion of wisdom's imitating divine action is not new. Raymond van Leeuwen has argued that wisdom's "liminal thinking" parallels the divine enactment of cosmic boundaries.[122] More recently, Schwáb has further argued that the house-building motif in Proverbs—that "wisdom has built her house, hewn out her seven pillars" (Prov

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Theology," in *The Writings and Later Wisdom Books*, ed. Christl M. Maier and Nuria Calduch-Benages, The Bible and Women: An Encyclopaedia of Exegesis and Cultural History (Atlanta: SBL press, 2014), 61–63.

[120] Though wisdom is not a divine being, we cannot easily dismiss how inseparable wisdom is from YHWH: wisdom is "beside" (אצלו) YHWH (8:30) and rejoicing before him at all times (בכל־עת).

[121] That Proverbs is concerned with the actualization of personified wisdom is further evidenced in the semblance of the woman of strength (אשת־חיל) in Prov 31:10–31 with many features of personified wisdom. Fox writes that the woman of strength is the culmination of the book of Proverbs "in which there resonates all that is said about wise women and Lady Wisdom elsewhere. But she does not personify wisdom; she *instantiates* it." Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 915.

[122] Raymond C. van Leeuwen, "Liminality and Worldview in Proverbs 1–9," *Semeia* 50 (1990): 117–26.

9:1)—alludes to the tabernacle/temple.[123] Though Schwáb does not connect wisdom's house-building with the concept of *imitatio Dei*, his conclusions appear to intimate this idea:

> Human beings can join wisdom in her house (i.e., the Lord in his temple) by being wise in the world. Building one's own earthly household and human relationships through being wise equals building the temple of the Lord, so to speak (בית יהוה) and this house is at the same time God's temple (בית חכמות) the whole universe is wisdom's house.[124]

Schwáb finds the idea of wisdom's imitating divine action most clear in the parallel between Proverbs 2:5–6 and 9–10:

Prov 2:5–6	**Prov 2:9–10**
אז תבין יראת יהוה ודעת אלהים תמצא: כי־יהוה יתן חכמה מפיו דעת ותבונה:	אז תבין צדק ומשׁפט ומישׁרים כלמעגלטוב: כי־תבוא חכמה בלבך ודעת לנפשׁך ינעם:
Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and you will find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth knowledge and understanding.	Then you will understand righteousness, justice, and equity, every good path. For wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

First, Schwáb points out that whereas YHWH is the subject of verses 6–9, wisdom is the subject of verses 10–11. Second, he argues that the sequence of the relationship between verses 5–8 and verses 9–10 is logical rather than temporal since wisdom does not envision a stage where the gaining of wisdom (2:6) is devoid of ethical meaning (vv. 9–10).[125] Third, the verbal and lexical parallels between the two passages are apparent: (1) the use of אז תבין in verse 5 and verse 9 and (2) the word-order parallels between כי יהוה יתן and כי תבוא חכמה.[126] Fourth, Schwáb argues that there is a parallel

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[123] Schwáb rejects Patrick Skehan's highly criticized view that the unity of the book of Proverbs is based on a structure resembling Solomon's temple. Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 198; cf. Patrick W. Skehan, "A Single Editor for the Whole Book of Proverbs," *CBQ* 10, no. 2 (April 1948): 115–30.

[124] Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 201.

[125] Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 134.

[126] Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 134.

between the conceptions of the fear of YHWH and the knowledge of God (v. 5) and ethical behaviors characterized by righteousness, justice, and equity (v. 9).[127] Therefore, the parallels between כי יהוה יתן (v. 6) and כי תבוא חכמה (v. 10) suggest a correspondence between wisdom's action and YHWH's action.[128] Just as YHWH gives wisdom, so also wisdom comes into the heart.

To complement Schwáb's observations, it is important to state that the parallels can simply be read as a cause-and-effect relationship—that because YHWH gives wisdom, so wisdom can enter into the heart. It is also apparent that wisdom in Proverbs 2:5–10 is acting in concursus with YHWH's action. Wisdom can do what she does (e.g., enter into one's heart) only because YHWH has first acted by endowing wisdom upon humanity. From the perspective of the phenomenology of wisdom's action, we can rightly state that there is a mimesis of divine action seen in the correspondence between wisdom's action and divine action. However, from the perspective of causality, it is also true to speak of a divine concursus, whereby divine agency serves as the primary cause of wisdom's agency.

Wisdom's imitation of and concurrence with divine action is an essential element in understanding how wisdom is deemed to accurately portray God's will in Proverbs. Hence, Proverbs can boldly declare: "There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him" (6:16).[129] By the same token, Proverbs can accurately speak of what pleases the LORD and describe YHWH's response: "When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes his enemies to be at peace with him" (16:7). Hence, wisdom's imitation of and concurrence with divine action give credence to the non-Yahwistic sayings as true representations of the divine will.

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[127] Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 139–45.

[128] Schwáb, *Toward an Interpretation of Proverbs*, 144.

[129] Cf. Prov 11:1, 20; 15:8, 9; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10; 21:27; 28:9.

Wisdom's Mimesis of Divine Writing

In light of our discussion that wisdom shares the Torah's conception of the internalization of the sacred text through writing, it is significant to note that the combination of the כתב with על and לוח occurs only in eleven verses in the Hebrew Bible.[130] Of the eleven occurrences, six refer to YHWH's writing of the tablets at Sinai. Outside of Proverbs, with the exception of Jeremiah 17:1,[131] each of these occurrences involves the writing down of divine oracles.[132] While the metaphor of writing on tablets is consonant with the scribal culture of the ancient Near East, the limited use of this language within the Hebrew Bible in the context of divine oracles suggests that the language might be reserved for sacred texts. I would suggest here that while the statement "write them on the tablets of your heart" bears some semblance with scribal culture, the language itself is connected with YHWH's writing of the tablets at Sinai.

First, it is important to note that there are other ways to speak of memorization/internationalization in Proverbs, such as "inclining your heart to understanding" (2:2), "Let your heart hold fast my words" (4:4), "Keep them within your heart" (4:21), and "Set your heart on my knowledge" (22:17).[133] Yet, the metaphor of writing on the tablet of the heart only occurs in Proverbs 3:3 and 7:3 together with a number of clear parallels to Deuteronomy 6 and 11. Moreover, it is significant that neither Sirach nor Wisdom of Solomon uses this metaphor. Considering Sirach's overriding concern with identifying wisdom with the Torah, the absence of this metaphor is striking.

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[130] Exod 34:1, 28; Deut 4:13; 5:22; 10:2, 4; Prov 3:3; 7:3; Isa 30:8; Jer 17:1; Hab 2:2.

[131] As Peter Craigie points out, the writing of Judah's sin on the heart is a contrast to YHWH's writing of his Torah on their hearts (Jer 31:33). Peter C. Craigie, *Jeremiah 1–25*, WBC, vol. 26 (Dallas: Word, 1991), 223.

[132] See Michael Floyd's explication of the relationship between prophecy and writing. Michael H. Floyd, "Prophecy and Writing in Habakkuk 2,1–5," *ZAW* 105, no. 3 (1993): 462–81.

[133] Cf. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 127.

Second, in both extant ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature, the command to "write on a tablet" within the inscriptions themselves is rare, much less the mention of writing on the tablet of one's heart. A close Egyptian parallel is in Papyrus Lansing, where it states, "Put the writings in your heart, and you will be protected from all kinds of toil."[134] Nili Shupak recognizes the lack of a parallel of this metaphor in Egyptian literature when she suggests that the phrase "write them on the tablets of your heart" possibly relates to "the Egyptian custom of carrying the writing tablets on the chest (heart), being tied by a cord around the neck for the purpose of memorization and repetition."[135] In other words, the concept of the metaphor might correspond with Egyptian customs, but the phraseology does not correspond with any extant Egyptian text. As such, it is highly probable that the phrase "write them on the tablets of your heart" is unique to Proverbs and finds parallels with biblical rather than non-biblical sources. More importantly, the language in Proverbs corresponds with that of Deuteronomy:

Deut 5:22	ויכתבם על־שני לחת אבנים	And he wrote them upon two tablets of stones.
Deut 10:2	ואכתב על־הלחת את־הדברים	I will write on the tablets the words.
Deut 10:4	ויכתב על־הלחת כמכתב הראשון	And he wrote on the tablets just as the first.
Prov 3:3	כתבם על־לוח לבך	Write them on the tablet of your heart.
Prov 7:3	כתבם על־לוח לבך	Write them on the tablet of your heart.

[134] Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 2:171.

[135] Nili Shupak, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (Fribourg, Switzerland: University Press, 1993), 409n65.

As we have seen above, Proverbs shares Deuteronomy's conception of the internalization of sacred texts through writing. Moreover, in Deuteronomy, both Israel's writing and Moses's writing are grounded on the foundation of divine writing. The mimesis of divine writing serves as means for the Israelites (Deut 6:8–9; 11:20) and their king (Deut 17:18), who stands as a representative of Israel, to internalize the sacred text.[136] Schaper states, "God's acts of writing are answered by the Israelites' acts of writing. But they do not simply write down the divine words, they also memorize and teach them and meditate upon them. Writing is thus not just an important thing in itself, it also serves as an aid to the practice of meditating upon the text."[137] Moreover, as Schaper points out, the act of writing was considered a "numinous act" in ancient societies in that writing was considered to be a magical act of participating in the divine realm.[138] In Deuteronomy's theology, then, "writing is an act of *imitatio Dei*, and memorizing the written word enables humans to get and stay in contact with the divine world."[139]

Given the likelihood of Israel's sages' awareness of YHWH's writing of the tablets at Sinai, it is most probable that Proverbs 3:3 and 7:3 appropriate the language of YHWH's writing and apply that language to the internalization of the sages' instructions. In other words, Proverbs shares Deuteronomy's concern that the writing and internalization of the Torah (either wisdom's or Mosaic) is a mimesis of divine writing.

As I have argued above, due to the lack of parallels between the phraseology of "writing them on the tablet of one's heart" and other ancient Near Eastern texts, the language of Proverbs 3:3 and 7:3 cannot be simply relegated to a common scribal vocabulary. As such, Schaper's contention that the account of YHWH's writing in

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[136] See Sonnet's discussion of Israel's king as representative of Israel. Sonnet, *Book within the Book*, 78–83.

[137] Schaper, "Theology of Writing," 106.

[138] Schaper, "Theology of Writing," 112.

[139] Schaper, "Theology of Writing," 113.

Deuteronomy is a "retrojection" of scribal thinking into the Sinaitic account stems from an *a priori* assumption that the Sinaitic account is fabricated to coincide with scribal thinking.[140] As Craig Bartholomew has argued, such an *a priori* assumption stems from a philosophical tradition that precludes "thick notions of God speaking and acting."[141] But if we were to take the God of Israel seriously as depicted in the Hebrew Bible, then there are good reasons to suppose that just as YHWH's writing of the tablets somehow becomes an impetus for Moses's and Israel's writing in Deuteronomy, so also YHWH's writing has shaped the concept of writing in the book of Proverbs as divine instructions. The exhortation for the students to write down sacred texts in Proverbs 3:3 and 7:3 has a divine mimetic warrant. The internalization and perpetuation of wisdom's sacred instructions through writing is also grounded on the foundational scene of YHWH's writing at Sinai.

Chapter Summary

I have argued in this chapter that while wisdom clearly lacks certain elements of the Mosaic Torah, such as YHWH's direct communication with a human mediator, wisdom in Proverbs explicitly identifies its instructions as God's words (2:6). This identification with divine discourse is further demonstrated by wisdom's affinities with the attributes of the divine Torah and mirrors how the Torah was received by Israel as a sacred text. Furthermore, wisdom is portrayed as a mimesis of divine speech and divine actions. I have argued that particularly, in Proverbs 3:3 and 7:3, not only does wisdom

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[140] Schaper, "Theology of Writing," 111. Hence, *imitatio Dei* is reduced to *imitatio hominis*. See John Barton's response to Cyril Rodd's construal of and objections to the concept of *imitatio Dei*. John Barton, "Imitation of God in the Old Testament," in *The God of Israel*, ed. R. P. Gordon, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 39–42. Cf. Cyril Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land: Studies in Old Testament Ethics,* Old Testament Studies (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 65–76.

[141] Craig S. Bartholomew, *The God Who Acts in History: The Significance of Sinai* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 228.

parallel the Mosaic Torah in requiring its reception as a sacred text but also, in similar ways, Proverbs perceives the writing of its instructions as a mimesis of divine writing.

I have argued that just as *imitatio Dei* is at work at the phenomenological level of Moses's act of writing, the same phenomenology is at work in Proverbs' discourse. In the written words of both the Mosaic Torah and Proverbs, the imitation of divine speech and actions corresponds with the texts' accounts of divine bestowal and identification of human discourse with the divine voice. In both instances, we are not aware of how divine agency functioned in the production of human words. However, the attribution of human words to divine bestowal renders divine agency as the cause of the human words in a way consistent with the theological conception of divine concursus. When seen in the light of Deuteronomy's conception of the Torah as divine discourse, wisdom's self-identification as the word of God, together with her mimesis of the Torah, divine speech, and divine actions, indicates that the book of Proverbs aims to portray wisdom as a divine discourse.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

While wisdom in Proverbs is typical conceived of as lacking in appeal to divine revelation, this dissertation has argued that the book of Proverbs intends for readers to take wisdom's instructions as a divine discourse just as Torah is a divine discourse. This dissertation has addressed two interrelated issues: the problem of divine and human agency and divine-human discourse in the book of Proverbs. The first problem is that many scholars conceive of wisdom in Proverbs as having an anthropocentric rather than a theocentric focus. Along with its anthropocentric focus, wisdom in Proverbs is thought of as primarily a human enterprise in which divine agency has marginal influence on how humans acquire wisdom and how wisdom functions in the created world. The second problem is the deficit of appeal to divine revelation in wisdom's discourse. Hence, scholars perceive wisdom in Proverbs as standing in contrast to revelation in history and prophetic revelation. That the two problems are related can be stated like this: If God does not act, then he does not speak. Hence, it is no coincidence that wisdom's anthropocentricism goes hand in hand with the assertion that wisdom stands as an alternative to divine revelation. This dissertation has treated these two issues with an exegetical-theological exploration of how divine and human agency can cooperate in the book of Proverbs.

A Reconstitution of a Compatibilism of Divine and Human Agency in Proverbs

In chapter 2, I surveyed the views of Walther Zimmerli, John Coert Rylaarsdam, and Gerhard von Rad to delineate three approaches to treating the relationship between divine and human agency in Proverbs. These approaches share

several common perspectives. Human agency serves as the starting point for scholarly reflection about the nature of wisdom. It is common for scholars to think of active divine agency as incompatible with human ability, thereby relegating divine agency to a supportive role. At best, divine agency serves as a counterbalance (as a dialectical force) against the over-secularization of wisdom's thought. In this chapter, I also noticed the tendency of taking the God-talk in Proverbs as lacking propositional content. Hence, I argued that the dichotomization of divine and human agency and the reduction of God-talk serve a pragmatic function that coincides with modernist philosophy. According to Immanuel Kant, genuine human agency is fundamentally opposed to the external influence of the divine. I treated the dichotomy of divine and human agency in greater detail in chapter 4, where I argued for the fundamental compatibility of human and divine agency.

In chapter 3, I treated the problem of the subjugation of divine agency under creation order. I first surveyed how various scholars have handled the Kochian notion of fate-producing deeds and its attendant concept of an impersonal order. According to Koch, God merely maintains a mechanistic conception of order and does not intervene in the workings of the order that he has set in place. The survey revealed how the concept of creation order came to be the theological center of the book of Proverbs, relegating God to a supportive role. I argued that the Kochian concept of order is analogous to the "laws of nature" of modern science in which the notions of "law" and "order" are typically understood as inviolable. Koch does not consider the possibility that divine intervention can be deemed compatible with either a necessitarian (ontological) or an instrumentalist (subjective) account of the law. Regardless, I contended that Proverbs finds agent-causation (i.e., agents causing events), rather than the modernist notion of event-causation (i.e., events causing events), more amenable to its worldview. Rather than making creation order the center of wisdom thought, wisdom is primarily concerned with how human and divine agency function in the world. As Lennart Boström has argued,

Proverbs is unconcerned with an impersonal order that stands between YHWH and his creatures. Koch's idea of a strict causal connection between actions and their consequences is undermined by the rehabilitation of divine retribution in Proverbs, the involvement of other agents in the act-consequence nexus, and the plurality of consequences available to the same action. In the end, YHWH operates as a primary agent for both rewards and retribution in ways that are compatible with personal responsibility. Nevertheless, there is still a sense (an instrumentalist sense) of regularity and order in Proverbs because YHWH is the God who acts to ensure that justice is carried out according to his will. Therefore, instead of subjugating divine agency under creation order, I argued that Proverbs perceives God as the one who ensures rewards and retribution. The God who acts is he who ensures the orderliness of his creation.

In chapter 4, I argued for the compatibility of divine and human agency based on a theology of divine concursus. To accomplish this task, I dealt first with the question of whether divine and human agency stand in tension (specifically, the tension between human potential and divine agency in those Yahwistic sayings that compare the two agencies) within the book of Proverbs. I contended that while there is a real contrast between the limitations of human agency and the unlimited agency of YHWH, the actions of both human beings and YHWH are complementary instead of oppositional in terms of their direction and purpose. In short, these passages portray divine actions as concurring with human actions by actualizing what human actions cannot accomplish on their own. Second, I dealt with whether divine actions are perceived as dualistic (whereby divine creative action is contrasted with divine intervention) in the book of Proverbs. I argued that while Proverbs makes no distinction between God's creative agency and interventive actions, the popularity of a dualistic conception of divine actions in Proverbs stems from an inadequate view of divine transcendence. Addressing these two questions helped set the context for my arguments for a divine concursus rooted in YHWH's absolute transcendence and distinction from creation and creatures in Proverbs.

I argued, along with Johannes Fichtner and Lennart Boström, that the book of Proverbs depicts YHWH as "wholly other," incomparable in his unlimited power and knowledge to anything else in creation. Moreover, YHWH's transcendence is inseparable from his agency as Creator. YHWH is the Creator of the human faculties of knowing and learning so that human agents can efficaciously align their faculties toward wisdom. YHWH's ability to create human senses that grant human beings causal power to effect changes in the world underscores his transcendence. No human can create the senses like YHWH. Besides, I argued that Proverbs depicts YHWH as having the ability to control the human senses. In short, Proverbs maintains that YHWH as Creator exercises unlimited agency over his creatures while endowing human agents with limited causal power to effect changes in the world.

Next, I argued that over and against the alternatives of deism and occasionalism, concurrentism best fits Proverbs' view of divine and human agency. It is no coincidence that Proverbs juxtaposes anthropocentric and theocentric sayings and emphasizes YHWH's sovereignty and transcendence over creation. As such, I applied Kathryn Tanner's proposal—that a non-competitive view of divine and human agency is anchored on a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence—as a coherent explanation of Proverbs' worldview. Accordingly, since God belongs to a different ontological plane than creation, his agency also operates at a different ontological plane. Divine agency is not to be contrasted with human agency as though they work on the same ontological plane. Hence, a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence allows for speaking of the Creator's agency as all-pervasive over every creature. Since divine agency operates on a different plane, it also allows for the co-existence of human agents endowed with genuine causal efficacies.

There are several implications of non-contrastive concurrentism on understanding the relationships between divine and human agency in Proverbs. First, the non-Yahwistic Proverbial sayings that focus on human actions are not anomalies in a

God-centered worldview properly anchored in a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence. Sentences that apparently affirm the efficacy of human activities in the world are coherent with a worldview that confirms the efficacy of both creative (divine) and created (human) agency.

Second, based on a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence, we can understand how Proverbs can affirm both the efficacy of human agency and human beings' dependence on YHWH. Genuine human agency is compatible with a reliance on divine assistance because the Creator's influence does not constitute an external but an internal influence over human agents.

Third, a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence undergirds the Proverbial sentences that speak of divine concurrences with human actions. Divine actions move in the same direction as human activities to actualize them. Concurrentism enables us to see how divine and human agency can function in concursus to achieve the same result.

Finally, a non-contrastive concurrentism implies that to the degree that human actions correspond with the divine will, human agency is directly proportionate to divine agency. The more human actions conform to the divine will, the more we can attribute to God the power to affect human agents. As such, Proverbs can rightly attribute the efficacy and success of human sages to the influence of divine agency. Far from rendering Proverbs' anthropocentrism as antithetical to theocentrism, concurrentism enables us to understand that Proverbs' anthropological "optimism" is only possible because of the efficacy of the Creator's agency.

In conclusion, we have come "full circle" with a reconstituted relationship between divine and human agency in Proverbs. Beginning with an anthropocentric focus, wisdom scholars have sought to reconcile the theocentric and the anthropocentric elements in Proverbs, only to arrive at a dialectical tension between the two. However, this dissertation has argued that if we begin our reflection on the relationship between

divine and human agency on the basis of a non-contrastive view of the transcendence of YHWH the Creator, then we can account for the compatibility of the agencies as reflected within the book of Proverbs. In contrast to modernist presuppositions, the preeminence and pervasive influence of the Creator's agency in no way undermine the causal efficacy of human agents. Instead, only the preeminence and pervasiveness of divine agency can guarantee genuine human agency. Divine action is central to the book of Proverbs—a book that accents the causal efficacies of human agents.

Wisdom as a Divine Discourse Just as Torah Is a Divine Discourse

In chapter 5, I began my argument for wisdom as divine discourse by examining the nature of divine discourse in the Deuteronomic Torah. A biblical paradigm is necessary for understanding the dual agencies of divine discourse since the theological conceptions of prophetic revelation and inspiration cannot provide sufficient clarity. Here, following Jean-Pierre Sonnet, I delineated Deuteronomy's theology of communication.

In Deuteronomy, the Mosaic Torah is depicted as an entirely mediated form of divine communication, the product of Mosaic agency. Moreover, according to Deuteronomy's portrayal, the Mosaic Torah, though consisting of the spoken words of Moses at Horeb, is only accessible in its written form after Moses's death. The written form of communication is essential to Deuteronomy's theology of communication. Deuteronomy is concerned with identifying the written Mosaic Torah book with the divine voice (Deut 30:10). Since then, the Mosaic Torah was fused to its written form. Moses was not only Israel's prophet *par excellence* but also Israel's writing prophet *par excellence*.

From Deuteronomy's theology of communication and interacting with Nicholas Wolterstorff's concept of divine discourse, I distilled three elements in Deuteronomy's theology by which a human discourse counts as a divine discourse:

authorization, identification, and emulation. The three elements act in tandem in the counting of human discourse as divine discourse. The counting of the Mosaic Torah as divine discourse involves Moses's self-identification of his Torah book with the divine voice and his emulation of divine action. Combined with the divine authorization of Moses's mediatorial role as the teacher of divine revelation, Moses's mimetic actions and speech further reinforce the notion that his Torah book indeed encapsulates the voice of the living God.

As discussed, divine authorization to speak on God's behalf, though explicit in prophetic passages, may or may not be explicit within a biblical text. The claim for prophetic authorization is not necessarily a sufficient criterion for "speaking in the name of God." For example, on account of Proverbs' Solomonic ascriptions (Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1), it is possible to regard the divine bestowal of wisdom as a kind of authorization (cf. Prov 2:6; 1 Kgs 3:11–15). Moreover, in Deuteronomy, speaking in God's name constitutes speaking as God has spoken through the Mosaic Torah. Considering the importance of oral-written discourse in Deuteronomy, "speaking in God's name" also includes writing as God has written. As such, the three elements of the divine authorization of the human discourser, the self-identification of the discourser's words as divine speech, and the mimesis of divine actions and divine speech work in tandem to count a human discourse as divine discourse.

In Deuteronomy, these three elements are essential for the reception of the Mosaic Torah as the divine voice. Since Moses fully mediates the Torah, there is no knowledge of the divine will apart from what is communicated in the Torah with which Israel can adjudicate the content of divine communication. Nowhere in the concluding frame of Deuteronomy (Deut 32–34) does the narrator raise any doubt that Moses is indeed speaking with the voice of God. As such, there could well be a theological basis for the phenomenon of Moses's imitation of divine actions. The Sinai event constitutes a foundational Mosaic encounter with God that shapes Moses's perception of God and the

nature of divine communication. The combined illocutionary force of God's speaking and writing the decalogue, together with his act of deputization, achieves the perlocutionary effect of Moses's emulation of divine writing. In other words, while Mosaic agency is genuinely efficacious in producing Moses's own words, which are written into a *Sepher*, Mosaic agency is nevertheless contingent upon YHWH's agency to (re)produce the voice of God. Here again, concurrentism can account for the concursus between divine and human agency in the production of the Mosaic Torah book.

In chapter 6, I returned to the main subject of this dissertation. I treated how wisdom in Proverbs can be counted as divine discourse even when there is a deficit in its appeal to prophetic revelation. Here, I noted the fundamental differences between wisdom and the Torah. Despite these differences, however, I argued that wisdom is portrayed as analogous to the Torah as divine discourse using Deuteronomy as a paradigm for dual-agency divine communication. Along with other scholars, I noted how the Solomonic ascriptions in Proverbs indicate a divine authorization for Solomon to write sacred texts.

Next, I argued that there are several ways in which wisdom is identified as divine discourse in Proverbs. First, Proverbs 2:6 identifies wisdom's discourse as divine speech. The sages' instruction is identified as wisdom from the mouth of God. In contrast to scholars who read Proverbs 2:6 as speaking about a divine bestowal of wisdom, I argued that 2:6b specifically ties wisdom to divine speech. Second, the identification of wisdom as divine discourse is evident in the affinities that wisdom shares with the divine Torah and the way Israel received the Torah as a sacred text.

Furthermore, Proverbs portrays wisdom's speech and performance as a mimesis of divine speech and actions. The speeches of personified wisdom share many affinities with divine speeches found in the Prophets and Torah. I also noted how wisdom corresponds with divine actions. In Proverbs 2:5–10, wisdom's actions correspond with YHWH's actions. I also argued that the command to write wisdom's instructions upon

the heart (Prov 3:3; 7:3) fits with Deuteronomy's concern that the education and writing of sacred texts is a mimesis of divine writing.

Therefore, I contended that wisdom in Proverbs shares Deuteronomy's theology that wisdom's discourse can be counted as a divine discourse primarily through its self-identification as divine discourse and mimesis of divine actions and speech. In similar ways, Proverbs is concerned with portraying wisdom as thinking and acting in concursus with God. In this way, the nature of wisdom's discourse coincides with its worldview that divine and human agency stand in concursus with each other. Just as YHWH, the Creator, is the primary agent who accompanies human agents in their pursuit of wisdom, YHWH is also the giver of wisdom who works in concursus with human sages to produce the wisdom texts. In the end, the wisdom embodied by the written text of the book of Proverbs is a sacred text proceeding "from the mouth of God." Hence, whether at the level of Proverbs' thought-world or at the level of its discourse, we can find a concurrence of divine and human agency to accomplish that which pleases YHWH (Isa 55:11).

Implications and Further Study

Two implications can be adduced from this study. First, the book of Proverbs serves as a divine discourse to shape its readers' character in the ways of divine wisdom. The book of Proverbs is primarily a divine discourse for sapiential formation. As Carl Dennis and Anne Stewart have argued, poetic texts such as Proverbs have the power to shape readers by persuasion through friendship.[1] The poetic power of Proverbial wisdom upon her readers rests, then, on her close intimacy with YHWH and her love and care for humanity. She persuades by inviting readers into a relationship with her and rejects those who approach her with casual advances. While wisdom is not to be equated with God,

[1] Carl Dennis, *Poetry as Persuasion* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 11; Anne W. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 151.

intimacy with wisdom in Proverbs is translated as intimacy with YHWH.[2] More than just an appeal to the intellect, the fundamental request of wisdom is the shaping of the heart's desires to pursue wisdom in fear of YHWH. Though readers should seek and desire wisdom, wisdom as a divine discourse actively aims to shape readers' desire to love wisdom and all of the values she espouses. In this sense, though humans are free to respond to wisdom's invitation, they do not acquire wisdom without divine assistance. While literary critics recognize the persuasive power of literary texts, the power of wisdom in Proverbs lies in its self-assertion that wisdom speaks with "divine accents."[3] Hence, the metaphor of friendship between the text and its readers is even more applicable when wisdom is seen as a divine discourse that offers a God's-eye view of life to its readers.

Second, this study has implications for canonical studies of the Bible. Though I have proffered the mimesis of divine action as an indication of Proverbs' canonical status, it has been beyond the scope of this study to examine whether the same principle holds for other books in the Bible, especially those books in the *Ketuvim*. As such, further research is needed to determine how other books exhibit their canonical consciousness and whether these align with Deuteronomy's theology of communication.

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[2] Cf. Paul Ricœur and Lewis S. Mudge, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 88.

[3] Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 147.

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ABSTRACT

WISDOM AS DIVINE DISCOURSE: AN EXEGETICAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

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While scholars typically conceive of wisdom in Proverbs as lacking in appeal to divine revelation, this dissertation argues that the book of Proverbs intends for readers to take wisdom's instructions as a divine discourse in a way analogous to the Torah. My thesis is that divine concursus undergirds the cooperation of human and divine agency such that the wisdom of Proverbs is taken as divine discourse just as the Torah is divine discourse. This dissertation addresses two interrelated issues in the modern study of the book of Proverbs: (1) the dichotomy of divine and human agency and (2) whether one can take Proverbs as divine discourse given the book's deficit in appeal to divine revelation. That the two problems are related can be stated like this: If God does not act, then he does not speak. Hence, it is no coincidence that wisdom's anthropocentricism goes hand in hand with the assertion that wisdom is something other than divine revelation. This dissertation treats these two issues via an exegetical-theological exploration of how divine and human agency cooperate in the book of Proverbs.

In contrast to the dichotomization of divine and human agency in Proverbs, I argue that the two agencies are fundamentally compatible based on a non-contrastive view of divine transcendence. This view entails arguing for the preeminence and pervasiveness of divine agency in Proverbs against the scholarly tendency to make human agency the starting point for reflecting on the thought-world of Old Testament

wisdom. Hence, this dissertation contends that divine concurrentism better accounts for the juxtaposition of anthropocentrism and theocentrism in the book of Proverbs.

This dissertation further argues that the lack of appeal to divine revelation in Proverbs does not pose a problem for taking Proverbs to be a divine discourse. Instead of thinking of Proverbs' canonical and divine status from the vantage points of revelation or inspiration, I argue that the Deuteronomic Torah presents a biblical paradigm for taking a human discourse as a divine discourse. From Deuteronomy's theology of communication, I contend that Proverbs intends wisdom to function as a divine discourse. Hence, whether at the level of Proverbs' thought-world or at the level of its discourse, we can find a concurrence of divine and human agency that accomplishes that which pleases YHWH (Isa 55:11).

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