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

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by
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

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

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

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

**Problem of the Alienation of Wisdom Literature**

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


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

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

Conservative Solution to the Alienation of Wisdom Literature

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

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

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

Approaching Theological Exegesis
CHAPTER TWO

Theological Exegesis

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

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

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

*Practice of Theological Exegesis*

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

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

theme, Kaiser observes that

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

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

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

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⁴ For example, it will be contended below that Penta-
teuchal legislation mandated Solomon's familiarity with the
Torah.
⁵ That is, New Testament texts should be allowed to
illuminate or amplify problematic Old Testament texts--but
they must not be employed to determine the thinking of the
earlier writer unless they clearly indicate such an intent.
informing theology of a given text involves the examination of those documents which we may properly hold to have been in existence and available to the writer of the section to be examined. As Kaiser further states, "It is this [anteecedent] theology which 'informs' the text and supplies the background against which this new revelation was given."\(^6\) Indeed, Kaiser goes so far as to speak of the utilization of subsequent Old Testament texts or of New Testament passages in the interpretive process as "an outright act of rebellion against the author."\(^7\)

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

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

\(^{8}\) Cf. Donn Morgan, \textit{Wisdom in the Old Testament Tradition} (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), who attributes the confusion in Wisdom studies partly to what his liberal
biblical indications as can be ascertained from the Bible with any degree of certainty. This diversity of approach and orientation in the two schools of thought calls for further examination.

**Difficulties in Theological Exegesis**

**Diverse Dating Systems**

The first and perhaps most obvious difficulty centers about the area of determining the dates of the documents. Generally committed to an evolutionary and naturalistic historiography, liberal writers tend to date books of the Bible as late as possible, disregarding textual claims to authorship (including New Testament data, where available). Liberal dating of the book of Proverbs ranges from the admission that some individual proverbs may date from Solomon's time\(^9\) to the position that the book reached its final form in the second century B.C.\(^{10}\) More conservative writers view the Solomonic proverbs as coming from the king of the same name. An even greater divergence may be witnessed in orientation compels him to term "[t]he absence of easily datable texts and explicit connections with other traditions[, which] makes it necessary for surmise" (p. 17). The conservative finds no such "absence" and, accordingly, no such necessity.


the dating of other books. As will be argued in the following chapter, the student believes that the solution lies in the acceptance of the *prima facie* evidence of Scripture.

**Isolation of Wisdom Literature**

As noted above, some scholars view Proverbs and the other Wisdom books as representing an alien presence in the Old Testament, bearing only a slight relation to Mosaism (if any relation at all is granted). Writers of this perspective form something of a spectrum of vantage points.

The common observation which forms the basis for this rather negative assessment of the role of the Wisdom writings is concisely stated by Zimmerli: "Wisdom has no relation to the history between God and Israel."¹¹ Crenshaw states the case more fully:

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

The manner in which academicians respond, to this putative "different thought world" varies considerably. Some would simply agree with Norman K. Gottwald in evaluating


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

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

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{18} Crenshaw, \textit{Old Testament Wisdom}, p. 208.

\textsuperscript{19} Glendon E. Bryce, \textit{A Legacy of Wisdom} (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1979), p. 206.

\textsuperscript{20} Bryce, p. 206. The book does not mention Prov. i.7.
origins. Not without resources, the scholars have plied
their considerable abilities in a studious endeavor to make
sense of this body of literary materials, resulting in a
rather bewildering array of theories, ranging from the views
noted above to the somewhat exotic multi-level reconstruc-
tion invented by William McKane. Nevertheless, the
impasse stands, occasioning the (to put the best face on it)
unfortunate result that the various portions of the Old
Testament are bifurcated (or, if one may proffer a neologism,
polyfurcated) into just so many essentially unrelated shards
of purely human notions.

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

*Toward a Solution*

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

*Rejection of Diverse "Levels"*

Many scholars (notably McKane, in more recent times)

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

This thesis, however, has been weighed and found wanting. As a general principle, Morgan observes that "it is usually the case that major traditions in any culture are interrelated,"22 so that an artificial series of divisions is not warranted. Further, Morgan notes that the (so-called) wisdom influence is detectable in texts which are not generally classified as "wisdom texts." He further observes that this phenomenon does not therefore witness to a combination of two or more epistemologically and theologically separable traditions. On the contrary, it points to a way of theologizing which utilized many different perspectives in an effort to find the common, Yahwistic matrix or thread behind all experience.23

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

22 Morgan, p. 21.  
the insistence upon seeing Wisdom Literature as "a late addendum to the religion of Israel and not characteristic of Hebraic thought" is indeed a "shabby treatment." 25 No facile separation between theological and non-theological Wisdom traditions in the process of Israelite history can be supported. 26 Even Crenshaw, whose critical approach is in many respects at loggerheads with that propounded herein, admits that piety is "edited" into all the strata "so thoroughly that the additions can only be removed by sheer conjecture. Or the person who opts for secular wisdom must be compelled grudgingly to admit that it never in fact existed." 27 We would differ from Crenshaw in suggesting that the presence of Israelite piety had nothing to do with any editing process, but was inherent in the world-views of the sages.

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

25 Thompson, p. 96.
26 Morgan, pp. 55, 145. Morgan also remarks that Wisdom "is from the beginning an integral, inseparable part of Israel's self expression and theological witness" (p. 55).
27 Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, p. 92. "It follows that wisdom contained a religious element from the beginning" (Crenshaw, p. 92).
natural equipment." The truths presented in Proverbs are thought to be "self-evident intuitions" beginning with human viewpoint and the assumption that life's problems may all be solved by truths culled sheerly from experience. The tacit assumption in these evaluations seems to be that reason and revelation may be neatly dichotomized.

This sort of distinction, however, is not desirable. As Morgan aptly comments, this sort of polarization is not a step forward from archaic biblical world-views, but rather an impediment to the doing of theology, which takes seriously all the dimensions of our experience.

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

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

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31 Morgan, p. 29.
a Yahwistic principle which is thematic for the book (Prov. i.7; cf. ix.10; xxii.19). This practical counsel operates from a "supernatural assumption." As Oehler puts it, Wisdom Literature's mode of procedure . . . is to endeavor, by means of that key of knowledge which revelation affords, better to understand God's ways in the world, and, through the knowledge of God's will furnished by the law, better to determine the duties of human life.

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

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

Recognition of Links with the Covenant Faith and Community

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

[33] Oehler, p. 538.
[34] Oehler, p. 383. "Such a notion is at variance with the fact that Solomon, who built the temple and gave completeness to the ritual of worship, stands at the head of these men [viz., the sages of Israel]."
antecedent revelation is found in the fact that King Solomon authored the first twenty-nine chapters of the work.\(^{35}\) This king was a monarch under Yahweh, sired by a deeply devoted Yahwist, involved deeply in the worship of Yahweh, and schooled in the law of Yahweh. In the fact of Solomonic authorship lies one of the most exciting veins for explanation due chiefly to two considerations.

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

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

This legal injunction was reinforced by its personal enunciation by Yahweh in Solomon's encounter with his Sovereign, as recorded in I Kings iii.14. Here Yahweh exhorts the young king to walk in His ways, keeping His statutes and commandments, a charge echoed in Solomon's hymnic prayer (Ps. lxxii.1 f.). It is accordingly not surprising that numerous parallels between Deuteronomy and Proverbs have

\(^{35}\) This portion of the argument assumes the conclusions relating to date and authorship which are presented in the following chapter.

\(^{36}\) Compare this phrase with the theme-verse of Solomon's pedagogic approach (Prov. i.7):
been noted. In addition, Waltke cites the references in Proverbs to the sacred vow (xx.25; xxxi.2), sacred lots (xvi.33), and firstfruits (iii.9). In a fascinating and helpful survey, Payne notes many parallels between the Decalogue and Proverbial ethics. Ample evidence exists to indicate a close relationship between Proverbs and the law of Yahweh.

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


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


40 The objective considerations adduced above are, however, of no value if one assumes with Crenshaw that "an impregnable mountain called Fantasy stands between biblical interpreters and the historical Solomon" (O. T. Wisdom, p. 44). In the view of the present writer, Crenshaw does not display an adequately self-critical consciousness of the veritable Fantasy Island onto which one of necessity steps when one casts aside the textual data, and begins to reconstruct history de novo.
importantly, with the injunctions of the law of Yahweh (cf. Deut. v.16; vi.6-9, etc.). We know from the historical record that the elder king commanded his son concerning the law of Yahweh in the most precise tones:

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

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

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

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

42 This consideration may be contrasted with the confident (and bewildering) assertion that "the attentive reader who is versed in the history of religion" will see that
inappropriately called by the generic word אֱלֹהִים, but would not be called יהוה -- for the latter is replete with that specificity which the former lacks. When one speaks of Yahweh, one eo ipso indicates the God who has entered into personal relationship with the nation of Israel by means of covenant and promise. As Waltke affirms,

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

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

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

Prominence of the same doctrine. Proverbs presents the

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

44 Crenshaw, O. T. Wisdom, p. 96.
same system of doctrine as that revealed in previous Scripture. Although, as Toombs points out, some writers have so narrowly defined theology in terms of cultus and history that they have automatically ruled out Proverbs' theological contributions, Solomon's doctrines do in fact harmonize with the full picture of Old Testament theology. Proverbs describes Yahweh in terms of the same character facets and acts as those ascribed to Him in the law, and propound the same anthropology, the same epistemology, the same faith, and the same hope, based on the same authority and making the same ethical demands as those made in the law.

Summary

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


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

\[\text{47} \text{ Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and O. T. Theology," pp. 308-16.}\]
covenant faith of Israel.\textsuperscript{48} From the information culled out of antecedent Scripture, one may confidently carry out a theological exegesis of Proverbs. Accordingly, the next task shall involve the determination of which portions of the Bible form the needed antecedent Scripture which will inform the theology of Proverbs.

CHAPTER THREE
Laying the Groundwork

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

**Date and Authorship of Proverbs**

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

\(^1\) The writer does not consider xxii.17 nor xxiv.23 to be statements of authorship, due in large measure to the recurrent singular verbs and pronominal suffixes (e.g., xxii.17, 19; xxiv.30).

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

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

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

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

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7 Unger, p. 373. For example, Harrison makes the odd statement that x.1-xxii.16 is the "first principal group of material attributed directly to King Solomon" (p. 1017).

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

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

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

Pentateuch

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

Joshua

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

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10 See, especially Archer, pp. 105 ff., 165 ff., 179-262; Harrison, pp. 542-662; also standard introductions of Young, Keil, and Unger.
11 See Harrison, p. 691; Archer, pp. 264 f.; Young, p. 163.
12 Young, p. 163.
13 Harrison, p. 673.
Pentateuch, it was probably also at Solomon's disposal.

*Judges*¹⁴

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

*Job*¹⁶

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

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¹⁴ See Harrison, p. 691; Archer, p. 274; Young, pp. 169-70.
¹⁵ Archer, p. 274.
¹⁶ See-Archer, pp. 456-62; Harrison, p. 1040; Young, pp. 319 ff.
¹⁷ The list is taken from Harrison, p. 1040, whom see for complete documentation.
¹⁸ Young, pp. 319, 323. Due to the uncertainty in this matter, greater weight will be given to the first three documents than will be assigned to Job.
possibility that the king was aware of the document or an outline of its contents.

Davidic Psalms

As argued in the preceding chapter, King Solomon was considerably influenced by his father David, the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. xxiii.1). Fortunately, we have an entirely reliable record of David's faith preserved in the Davidic Psalms, wherein the fountainhead whence Solomon's own faith flowed may be explored.

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

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

Painting the Backdrop

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

**Pentateuchal Data**

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

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narrates a struggle-free fiat creation, in which Yahweh's mere verbalization of His desires results in the existence of the intended result.\(^4\) Because all entities, sentient and non-sentient, exist due to the will of God, creation is utterly subordinated to Yahweh's will.\(^5\)

Genesis consistently depicts Yahweh as taking the initiative, whether in creation (i.1 ff.), judgment (iii.14 f.; vi.5 f.; xi.1 f.; xix.1 f.), or election (xii.1 f.). The most illuminating revelation of Yahweh's exhaustive control may be found in the Joseph narratives, in which Yahweh acts through the brothers' evil deeds for a good end. No facile equivocation is met in these chapters; the brothers did indeed harbor an evil intention (1.20a), but Yahweh moved through the entire chain for His beneficent ends (xlv.5, 7; 1.20b). As Carson aptly observes,

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

The point is worthy of stress: Yahweh reaches His determined goal by His sovereign control of the human process of

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\(^4\) Witness the later reflection on this fact in the anonymous Psalm xxxiii.6, 9.


\(^6\) Carson, p. 10.
fomenting and executing evil plans.\(^7\)

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

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

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


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


\(^11\) That such full value is to be drawn from the text is evidenced by later, inspired reflections (Mal. i.2 f.; Rom. ix.10 f.).
Yahweh's choice.

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

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

A revealing note is sounded in Exodus xxi.13. Yahweh lays down the general principle in verse 12 that anyone who is the cause of a man's death should suffer the death penalty. After this basic law, specific provisions are made
for exceptional cases. The determining factor was the motivation, or lack thereof, for murder. Thus verse thirteen excludes from capital offense culpability the man who has not lurked about for the murder of the victim. This sort of case is what could be called an "accidental death"--yet the text clearly attributes the death to God's agency (v. 13).

"Thus even what men call accidental death is under God's direction," as Oehler observes.12

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

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

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

Old Testament.\textsuperscript{15} Leviticus stresses in its twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters a theme with which Wisdom Literature is redolent—the law of retribution.\textsuperscript{16} Simply put, the principle is that "he who did right [viz., who walked in Yahweh's laws] would find his whole environment friendly; while he who forsook 'the way of Yahweh' would find himself thwarted at every turn."\textsuperscript{17} Obedience would bring Yahweh's comprehensive blessing (Lev. xxvi.3-13), disobedience His comprehensive curse (Lev. xxvi.14 ff.).\textsuperscript{18} Thus, the key to the truly good life lay in maintaining good relations with Yahweh.

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


\textsuperscript{18} "This retribution is not the result of an impersonal fate but that of a personal God," observes D. A. Hubbard, "The Wisdom Movement and Israel's Covenant Faith," \textit{Tyndale Bulletin}, No. 17 (1966), p. 10.
and rejection in terms of singling out those who are to be His servants, and rejecting any who would try to usurp this privilege (Num. xvi-xvii). Numbers also depicts Yahweh as sovereign over individuals. He is the God of the spirits of all flesh (xvi.22; xxvii.16). This is illustrated in the attempted hiring of the prophet Balaam to curse Israel, during which episodes Yahweh constantly overrides the prophet and the king by pronouncing His blessing on His people (xxii.18, 35; xxiii.5, 20).

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

Data From Joshua

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

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

Data From Judges

Judges paints a series of pictures illustrating the principle of retribution. When Israel forsakes Yahweh and His laws, He activates the thoughts and plans of foreign dignitaries in such a way as to give them success over Israel, to effect the sure punishment of the latter (Judg. ii.11 f.; iii.7 f., 12 f.; iv.1 f., etc.). With equal sovereignty, Yahweh also is at work to mercifully assure the deliverance of His people (as indicated in the programmatic statement of Judg. iii.18).

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

19 Oehler, p. 122.
Yahweh's Spirit comes upon Othniel (iii.10), Gideon (vi.34), Jephthah (xi.29), and Samson (xiii.25), certainly as diverse a group of men as one could hope to find, for the sole purpose (as one may readily surmise) of executing His will. When Yahweh wishes to judge evil men, He sends an evil spirit\(^{20}\) between differing factions for the accomplishment of His purpose (Judg. ix.23-24). Yahweh may indeed turn the individual just as He pleases (Prov. xxi.1).

**Data From Job**

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

\[^{20}\text{It makes no essential difference whether one sees the term as being used ontologically or psychologically; the central point is that the socially disrupting influence was sent by Yahweh--the "flip side" of Prov. xvi.7.}\]
commonplace of deferring to intermediate agencies or free will. They are all agreed that Yahweh stands behind Job's experience; the only question in their minds was, "Why did Yahweh bring this turn of events?" The three thought the cause lay in Job's sin; Job rather seemed to be of the opinion that the cause lay in a sort of administrative error (xix.9; xxvii.2; cf. xxiv.5).

When He makes His appearance, Yahweh is not recorded to have explained the dialogue with Satan to which the readers had already been privy (chaps. i-ii). Instead, He asserts His comprehensive sovereignty over all of reality as its Creator and Sustainer (Job xxxviii-xlii). Job may dispute with God when He can produce the requisite credentials (xxxviii.4 f., 31 ff.; xxxix.1 f., etc.). The point is not lost on Job, who admits his folly (xlii.3-6) and affirms Yahweh's absolute sovereignty (xlii.2).

Data From the Davidic Psalms

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

21 Although the Hebrew text is without an ascription, the New Testament claims David as the author in Acts iv.25 (though cited without ascription elsewhere--Acts xiii.33; Heb. v.5, etc.). The New Testament testimony is accepted in this discussion.
fierce plottings (Ps. ii.4; cf. lxix.8). This is so because Yahweh's kingdom extends over all Gentiles (xxii.8), for He is the King of Glory (xxiv.8, 10; xxvii.11) forever (xxix.10; cf. lxvi.7), with a kingdom (מלכ) that rules over all the world under the heavens, in which His throne is established (ciii.l9). Yahweh is David's own king (obviously subordinating the derivative sovereignty of David to Yahweh; cxlv.1; cf. Prov. xxi.1), and His kingdom is majestic and glorious (Ps. cxlv.12-13).

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

Yahweh could exercise such sovereignty because He was creator. In fact, the heavens were His heavens (Ps. viii.3; cxix.5); rather than saying with moderns "it is thundering,"
David's view of nature led him to say "Yahweh thunders" (cf. xxix.3). Because He is creator, the entire world and its inhabitants are Yahweh's personal possession (xxiv.1), and it is His role to ensure that the creation is maintained (lxv.6-13; cxxlv.14-16). Jacob has rightly observed, "The creation is maintained, not by virtue of autonomous laws, but by Yahweh's free will."  

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

**Summary**

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

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22 Jacob, p. 227.
If need be, Yahweh could reign in any portion of His creation, animate or inanimate, sentient or insentient. No purpose of His could be thwarted; in some way, the present state of affairs reflects His counsel. Such is the foundation for Solomon's theology.
PART II

Applying Theological Exegesis to the
Sovereignty of Yahweh in Proverbs
CHAPTER FIVE

The Sovereignty of Yahweh and Man's Success

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

*Proverbs iii.5-6*

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

*Exegesis*

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

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lean, whether literally or figuratively\(\textsuperscript{2}\) on his own insight into the matter.

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

*Theological Analysis*

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


\(\textsuperscript{6}\) "יָשַׁר" *TWOT*. 
of making straight... or, perhaps, better still, making smooth." The same form of יַשַׁר, is used again in Proverbs xv.21, speaking of the manner in which the man of insight makes his going straight and successful (שֶּׁר־לָכֶתיְיַ), as opposed to the foolish way of the crooked man. The point of emphasis would seem to be the priorities of the man. If he puts Yahweh at the center of his universe, being aware of the control and presence of Yahweh, he will find that Yahweh removes the obstacles from his paths and brings him to his right end. The thought is analogous to that expressed by Solomon's father in Psalm xxxvii.4, where the promise of Yahweh's giving one the desires of his heart is preceded by the injunction to delight oneself in Yahweh. David is saying that one's delight in Yahweh will conform one's heart's desires to Yahweh's plan; Solomon is similarly saying that the one who fully trusts in Yahweh, knowing Him in all of life's departments and not leaning upon human viewpoint, will find his path being conformed to Yahweh's will. There is no explicit injunction to seek the guidance of Yahweh; the straightening of the way seems to be solely Yahweh's doing, consequent upon one's maintenance of the right priorities in the knowledge of Yahweh.

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7 Zöckler, Charles A. Aiken's note, p. 59.  
9 Delitzsch, I, 88.
This attitude of wholehearted, undivided trust may well have been instilled by the king's father, whose own attitude is reflected so poignantly in Psalm lxii, wherein the recurrent theme is the waiting of David's soul upon Yahweh alone (cf. verses 1-2, 5, 6). David exhorts the readers/singers to trust in Yahweh "at all times" (v. 8, יְבָעֵלַם--perhaps conceptually related to יְבָעֵלַם, Prov. iii.6). Similar terminology is reflected in the well-known Deuteronomy vi.5, wherein believing Israelites are commanded to be loyal to Yahweh with all of their beings, which results in an occupation with Him extending to all the departments of life (Deut. vi.6-9).

Observations

The manner in which this passage blends with antecedent revelation has been noted above. Casting a brief glance at subsequent revelation, one sees in King Ahaz the very antithesis of this section. Eschewing pure Yahwism, Ahaz sought his succor in humanly-devised aid (Isa. vii.1-2; cf. II Kings xvi.5-18), refusing to trust Yahweh (Isa. vii.9, where note the word-play) and rebelling against His proffered aid (vii.12). As Jeremiah later reflects, when a man trusts in mankind his heart necessarily departs from Yahweh (Jer. xvii.5-6).10

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

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

Proverbs xvi.3
Commit your works to [Yahweh],
And your plans will be established (NASB).

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

13 Delitzsch, I, 336.
reckon, estimate). The appended promise assures the respondent that his contemplated plans will be established. The word used is וְיִכֹּנוּ, which is wawconjunctive with the Niphal imperfect from the root כּוּן, which signifies "to prepare, make ready, establish. Solomon's parallel usages in Proverbs (xii.3; xvi.12; iii.19; xxix.14) support the idea of a thing being rendered stable, secure, and lasting. The simple † used with the imperfect form here suggests a non-indicative mood, perhaps the subjunctive; thus one may accept McKane's rendering, "that your plans. . .".

Theological Analysis

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

Solomon's stress upon the necessity of commitment to

17 McKane, p. 497.
Yahweh was doubtless derived from his father (cf. Ps. xxii.8; xxxi.5; xxxvii.5; lv.22; lxvii.19). As Solomon himself attested elsewhere, ever so much labor in building and guarding is worthless if Yahweh's blessing is absent from an endeavor (Ps. cxxvii.1-2). No human acts or plans can counter Yahweh (Prov. xix.21; xxi.30). Such knowledge was important for a king; plan as he might, nothing outside of Yahweh's sovereign will could hope for fulfillment.

Observations

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

Proverbs xvi.7

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

Exegesis

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

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Theological Analysis

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

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

Observations

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

\textit{Summary}

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

\textsuperscript{20} Derek Kidner, \textit{The Proverbs}, TOTC (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1964), p. 119.

\textsuperscript{21} Cf. Bridges, p. 231.
CHAPTER SIX
The Sovereignty of Yahweh and Man's Plans

Due to the relative abundance of texts asserting the control Yahweh exercises over the plans of men, only six verses will be singled out for examination: Proverbs xvi.1, 9, 33; xix.21; xx.24; and xxi.1.

Proverbs xvi.1
The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from [Yahweh] (NASB).

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

2 Although W. O. E. Oesterly (alone, it would appear) takes the  cạnh of the second stanza as continuative, so that "both thought and its utterance are from God" (The Book of Proverbs, Westminster Commentaries [London: Methuen, 1929], p. 126).
(Gn. 14:8), or laying a fire (Gn. 22:9). Each stanza begins with an inseparable preposition and a noun for emphasis; the first preposition is a לְ (in לְאָדָם), and the second is מִן (in וּמֵיהוה), contrasting the facts that while the plan of the heart are man's possessions, the answer of the tongue issues from Yahweh as ultimate source.

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

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8 New English Bible.
will,\textsuperscript{10} the ability to phrase ideas in convincing words,\textsuperscript{11} or something else? The decision is not easy. The term מַעֲנֵה is found again in Proverbs only in xv.1, 23; xvi.4 (?); and xxix.19. The closest grammatical parallel is xv.23, where the phrase is בְּמַעֲנֵה־פִיו, and clearly denotes the answer which one's own mouth gives (as the parallel stanza would seem to demand). This would yield what appears to be a difficult sense: how could it be that the arrangements of the heart would be man's, but the answer which a man's tongue gives would be Yahweh's?

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

Theological Analysis

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

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

Observations

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

Proverbs xvi.9

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

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12 Num. xxii.18; cf. Bridges, p. 224.
Exegesis

The proverb is something of a cross between xvi.1 and 3. The mind of man calculates, reckons, makes estimates (יְהַּשֵׁב) concerning his way, as in xvi.1a (allowing for different terminology). His steps are, however, established and made firm (rather than NASB's "directs"; יָכִין) by Yahweh according to His will.

Theological Analysis

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

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

Observations

As Bridges observes, "What vast results hung upon the sleepless night of the Eastern autocrat! Esth. vi. 1" (p. 233). Even the restive pacings of the king were directed by Yahweh and were made firm in the accomplishment of His decree. As the psalmist Asaph observed, Yahweh is able to catch and establish us just as our steps are slipping and we
are in danger of falling (Ps. lxxiii.2 ff.).

\textit{Proverbs xvi.33}

The lot is cast into the lap,  
But its every decision is from [Yahweh] \textit{(NASB)}.

\textit{Exegesis}

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

\textit{Theological Analysis}

Although we may be fairly sure that this verse is not necessarily a "certain reference to the machinery for consulting Urim and Thummim," \textit{pace} McKane,\textsuperscript{16} it is difficult to determine the exact context of this lot-casting. There is

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Oesterley, p. 137.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Oesterley, p. 137, who observes that this is the only occurrence of the verb in this connection.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} McKane, p. 499.
\end{itemize}
no compelling reason for ruling out a reference to God in
the casting of this lot.\textsuperscript{17} Although the Pentateuch does not
mandate the use of the lot explicitly, its use is taken up
and sanctioned to a certain degree.\textsuperscript{18} Delitzsch correctly
observes that "it was a practice, animated by faith, in
God's government of the world, which . . . stood high above
the unbelief of the 'Enlightenment.'"\textsuperscript{19} Kidner goes beyond
the evidence in asserting that this verse refers not to God's
control of random events, but to His "settling of matters
properly referred to Him."\textsuperscript{20} Oehler both affirms what is
here taken as the proper signification of the text and pro-
vides the background of antecedent revelation: "Even in
drawing lots there rules no chance, Prov. xvi.33; and so in
Num. xxvi. 55f., Josh. vii. 14ff., xiv. 2, 1 Sam. xiv. 41,
the lot is used in seeking to know the divine will."\textsuperscript{21} Von
Rad is surely wide of the mark in denying full theological
significance to this verse.\textsuperscript{23} Solomon uses a figure which,

\textsuperscript{17} R. N. Whybray, \textit{The Book of Proverbs}, Cambridge Bible
p. 334.
\textsuperscript{18} Delitzsch, I, 351. \textsuperscript{19} Delitzsch, I, 352.
\textsuperscript{20} Kidner, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{21} Gustav Friederich Oehler, Amer. ed. G. Day, \textit{Theology
of the Old Testament} (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978
[rpt]), p. 122.
\textsuperscript{22} Glendon Bryce, \textit{A Legacy of Wisdom} (Cranbury: Assoc.
at present, is proverbial for pure randomness and chance, and utilizes the figure to illustrate Yahweh's sovereignty.

Observations

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

Proverbs xix.21

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

Exegesis

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

\(^{24}\) Kidner, p. 122.
both in becoming actual fact and in enduring.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{Theological Analysis}

In terms of theological background, Solomon had doubtless heard from his father concerning the time David had prayed that Yahweh would turn his enemy Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness (II Sam. xvi.31), which Yahweh did (II Sam. xvii.14). Previously, Yahweh had seen that the \( \text{מַחְשְׁבוֹת} \) of men's hearts were only wicked all day (Gen. vi.5), and His willingness to cancel out these machinations in favor of His own counsel is not surprising.

\textit{Observations}

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

\textit{Proverbs xx.24}

\begin{quote}
Man's steps are ordained by [Yahweh],
How then can man understand his way? (\textit{NASB}).
\end{quote}

\textit{Exegesis}

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

\textsuperscript{25} Delitzsch, II, 32.
less "loaded" phrase such as "come from," rather than "are ordained by" (NASB) or some form of "direct" (NEB, Anchor Bible [Scott]). The man is a גָּבֶר, a strong man; how much more would this apply to an ordinary man?²⁶

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

**Theological Analysis**

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

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²⁹ Whybray, p. 116.
³⁰ Kidner, p. 140.
Observations

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

Proverbs xxi.1

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

Exegesis

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

Hiph'il imperfect form of the root נָטָה. It is frequently used of literal and metaphorical inclination, applied to wadis and heart alike.  

Theological Analysis

This is an interesting proverb to find on the lips of a king. Solomon found his proper place at the disposal of Yahweh, and realized that he was not above the control of the King. Calvin's comment is apposite, as he notes that Solomon in this verse comprehends the whole race under one particular class. If any will is free from subjection, it must be that of one possessed of regal power, and in a manner exercising dominion over other wills. But if it is under the hand of God, ours surely cannot be exempt from it.

The truth of this verse gives trouble to the theory of free will—except as possessed by Yahweh. Calvin further remarks that this verse goes far to show Yahweh's control over "the depraved affections of the ungodly," and shows that "in general the will not less than external works are governed by the determination of God." Remarkably enough, however, the setting of this verse in as pragmatic a book as

Proverbs forbids the application of this verse in any way that would lead to what Eichrodt calls "a flat determination depriving Man of the responsibility for his actions."\(^{38}\)

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

**Observations**

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

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

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\(^{39}\) Bridges, p. 364.

\(^{40}\) Kidner, p. 141.
(Is. 41:2-4) and Artaxerxes (Ezr. 7:21) are all examples of autocrats who, in pursuing their chosen courses, flooded or fertilized God's field as He chose. The principle is still in force.\textsuperscript{41}

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

Summary

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

\textsuperscript{41} Kidner, p. 141.
CHAPTER SEVEN

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

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

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

Exegesis

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

1 Gill is thus wrong in arguing that the singular
suffix in כֹּל must refer to Yahweh; grammatically, it
could refer equally well to כֹּל (John Gill, The Cause of God
2 F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew
and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (hereafter BDB),
3 Victor P. Hamilton, "פעל," Theological Wordbook
of the Old Testament (hereafter TWOT), ed. R. Laird Harris,
Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, II (Chicago:
Moody, 1980), 730.
antecedent passages are as follows: Exodus xv.17 (Yahweh made the mountain of His inheritance for His dwelling place); Numbers xxiii.23 (what God has wrought for Israel); Deuteronomy xxxii.27 (Yahweh's action in judging Israel); Psalm vii.13 (Yahweh making his arrows fiery shafts); xxxi.19 (Yahweh has made goodness for those who fear Him). Solomon's other uses in Proverbs refer to man's doing of iniquity (Prov. x.29; xxi.15). Solomon's father used the noun פֹּעַל to refer to Yahweh's acts in days past (including creation?; Ps. cxliii.5). The noun was used in Deuteronomy xxxii.4 to refer to Yahweh the Rock's works as תָּמִים and again by David in Psalm lxiv.9 to refer to God's work. The rendering of the New International Version, "works out," yields an interesting sense—but is not supported explicitly by any of the usages of the verb or noun. All of the usages noted refer to God's direct, causative action, and not to His mere superintendence of a process (although this meaning could conceivably be read into the texts). The text of the Septuagint here has only the most coincidental relationship to the Hebrew text and is of no help. Most commentators agree on or at least accept the meaning of "to make," i.e., creatively. An equally acceptable refinement is added by Gill,

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

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

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

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6 "עָנָה," *BDB*. 

*Bible* and the *Modern Language Bible*, to pick two versions from opposite ends of the theological spectrum.
some *a priori* theological notions alone. The parallelism to the second clause of this synthetic parallelism\(^8\) distich supports the reference of לְמַעֲנֶהוּ to כֹּל, for the second clause is incomplete and derives its consummative idea from the first clause.\(^9\) The two thoughts are linked by the first word of the second clause, וְגַם.

The corresponding end for which Yahweh made the wicked is said to be לְיוֹם רָעָה. The precise signification of this phrase is not certain. Some (Calvin, Gill, Bridges) seem to take the phrase in an eschatological sense, referring to the damnation of the wicked. This will be discussed further in the next section; here we note that the precise expression is not used again in Proverbs. In Ecclesiastes, which we take as Solomonic, is an interesting parallel. Solomon counsels his audience in vii.14 to be happy in the day of "prosperity" (בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה), but to consider (רְאֵה) in the day of adversity (בְּיוֹם רָעָה) that Yahweh made (עָשָׂה) the one as well as the other. One would hardly take the first clause to refer to the Eternal State; the phrases seem to denote times of felicity and adversity, respectively. A similar expression is found in xii.12, where the reader is counseled

to remember his Creators (בּוֹרְאֶיָּהּ) he is still young, before the evil days (יְמֶי הָרָעָה) come. Again, a reference to perdition would not lie close at hand. There is no question that the emphasis in the occurrences of רָעָה, in Proverbs is quite this-worldly (cf., e.g., Prov. i.33; iii.29-30; xi.27; xiii.21; xvii.13; xxii.3, etc.). Inasmuch as eschatological realities were not the regular focus of Old Testament writers (though by no means beyond their purview), it would be best to take the primary reference to fall upon pre-death adversity, perhaps more precisely the "come-uppance" of the wicked. Yet it must be observed that the general reference would quite handily fit the eschatological, eternal woes of the damned, for that period is most surely רָעָה!10

At the close of this section the writer would proffer the following interpretive paraphrase: "All has Yahweh fashioned for its own answering destiny, including the wicked for their own time of adversity."

_Theological Analysis_

The very least that could be said for the meaning of this proverb (and that which is most frequently said, as being least objectionable) is that it teaches that there are

10 The eschatological reference cannot be finally excluded due to the fact that the first clause seems to bring up ultimate considerations, reaching as it were into eternity past to inquire as to the reason for the design of reality. Since the ultimate meaning of the creation of things seems to be emphasized, it is not untoward to see a reference also to the ultimate destiny of those things.
no loose ends in Yahweh's creation.\footnote{11} Seeing לְמַעֲנֵהוּ as referring primarily to כֹּל in no way minimizes this verse's stress upon the sovereignty of Yahweh, as Perowne observes: "The two meanings really run into one another, for he who makes a thing to serve its own purpose makes it to serve his own purpose in so making it."\footnote{12} The verse also surely provides a basis for teleological inquiries as well.

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

\footnote{15 Cf. Gill, \textit{Cause}, pp. 71-72.}
their damnation lies in the evil ones who walk into their doom to the greater glory of God.\textsuperscript{16}

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

\textit{Observations}

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


\textsuperscript{17} Charles Bridges, \textit{Proverbs} (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968 [rpt.]), p. 228.
The preceding discussion has shown that the deadlock in Proverbs-studies can be broken if (and only if) the student is willing to take the text of Scripture seriously as reliable factual data. When this step is taken, Proverbs and other Wisdom writings are seen to fit in with the rest of Old Testament revelation in perfect harmony. Solomon was inheritor of a rich and deep tradition of revealed theology, and he incorporated that into his own world-view. Bifurcations are strictly artificial and unwarranted.

The methodology of theological exegesis was applied to a strand of texts relating the truth of the sovereignty of Yahweh to the human situation. These verses were found to accord with and focus the theology already unveiled in earlier Scripture. These passages assessed that Yahweh unerringly controls all of reality. On Him depend man's plans (Prov. iii.5-6; xvi.1, 3), from Him come man's very steps (Prov. xvi.9; xx.24), on Him the decision of the lot rests (Prov. xvi.33), to Him the king is pliant (whether consciously or not; Prov. xxi.1), on Him human relations depend (Prov. xvi.7), and against Him all plans are of no avail (Prov. xix.21). Even the human process of deciding and verbalizing plans depends upon Him (Prov. xvi.1).
All of the data lead in one direction: the realization that all of existence is designed and ruled by the sovereign Lord Yahweh (Prov. xvi.4). Scripture almost exhausts the device of metaphor in stressing this point. As the preceding investigation has shown, this truth grows out of and is in perfect keeping with the assertions of antecedent Scripture, both in its primal form and in its development, both in assertions and in historical narratives. It remains only for the creature to internalize these realities and to find his proper place—in worship of his Creator, at the foot of the cross.
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