

WISDOM LITERATURE AND THE PROMISE DOCTRINE

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The difficulty of developing a theology of the Old Testament Wisdom Literature and of finding its place in the whole of Old Testament theology would be considerably less complex if, instead of those wisdom books which we find in the Old Testament canon, we had those which are found in the Apocrypha, particularly the books of Ben Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. It seems that the tensions which the modern biblical theologian faces in dealing with the canonical wisdom corpus were realized by the authors of these later books, for they appear to have modified their views in order to avoid such problems. The particular areas of tension are two in number: the aspect of the source of wisdom, whether it is human, divine, or some tertium quid, and then the aspect of its universal perspective, for the writings are in no way as Judaeo-centric as those preceding them.

Before dealing with these two difficulties, however, several other preliminary matters ought to be considered. The most basic of these is the extent of the canonical wisdom: in this category would class Proverbs, Song of Songs and Job. Although there are further examples of wisdom *forms* scattered throughout the Old Testament, it is these books which fall entirely within that category. A second consideration has reference to critical matters: i.e., date and authorship. In a paper of this scope it is impossible to give full reign to the discussion of criticism and thus certain presuppositions will have to be made in that area. The major assumption is that where a title occurs it is to be treated as accurate. Consequently, three of the four books will be, to a great degree, dependent upon the work of King Solomon.¹ This is not to say that there were no later additions or perhaps even redaction, for we read of the work of "Hezekiah's men" in collecting and publishing Solomonic material (Prov. 25:1) which is a redactional function. Nevertheless, for our purposes the bulk of the literature derives from Solomon. Lastly, the schema of Heilsgeschichte into which the theology of wisdom will hopefully be fitted is generally that given in W. J. Beecher's *The Prophets and the Promise*: epangelicalism or the "theology of the Promise." Having aired the data to be presupposed, it is hoped that the conclusions, particularly those which lie heavily on the aspect of chronology, will be more easily acceptable.

¹ Even excepting the proverbs attributed to Agur and Lemuel, this is an assumption which is, at the least, hotly debated. Cf. R.B.Y. Scott, "Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel," in *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. by M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), for a typical negative point of view on this matter.

Contemporary thought has come to regard Heilsgeschichte as the story of God's disclosure of himself and his salvation, on our view particularly through the Promise. Likewise we have come to think of this disclosure or revelation as a bi-partite complex, usually termed a Deed-Word event.² However, in the Wisdom Literature we find a strange one-sidedness, for there is no action of God depicted there; there is only the Word, the teaching. Thus we are led to look for the divine movement to which to attach this teaching. Because of the problems in the theology of the Wisdom Literature, those regarding revelation and universalism referred to above, some are wont to attach it to creation.³ That is, this Wisdom Literature is a sort of Old Testament natural theology: without direct revelation and (apparently) without any direct relationship to God's working in Israel, the Wisdom Literature is a collection of observations on the "satisfying life" and the problems encountered in obtaining it. The emphasis here is upon God's common grace and what it can achieve in man. Thus while generalizing and forming a theology of Old Testament wisdom, this view has despaired of correlating it with God's work in Israel and has instead considered it to be a parenthesis in the Heilsgeschichte rather than a part of it.

It is just at this last point, however, that the view can be criticized, simply by taking the history of wisdom into account. We can see in this regard that although the Wisdom Literature had its predecessors, it has, as a body of literature, derived almost wholly from the Solomonic era. The forebearers of wisdom in Israel are well known, and we have examples of proverbs. (I Samuel 10: 12; 2 Samuel 20: 18), fables (Judges 9:8-15), riddles (Judges 14: 12-19), and.. parables (2 Samuel 12: 1-4). But what is to explain the sudden outburst of wisdom with the arrival of Solomon if it is creation and God as creator who is the subject of that thought? A seemingly good answer is that as the monarchy

²G. E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, I 1967). See the first chapter entitled "How is the Bible the Word of God." The concept expressed in the phrase "Deed-Word Event" does not parallel the thought of the Myth and Ritual School led by S. Hooke, for the deed is not a ritual re-enacting of the salvific works of God, but 'is itself the work of God. Likewise, the Word is not the accompanying story behind the ritual, but the divine commentary on and explanation of the divine act of salvation. Together these two aspects of Word and Deed form revelation.

³W. Baumgartner, "The Wisdom literature:' in *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, ed. by H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951 I, p. 212. Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs; an Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964), p. 17. O. S. Rankin, *Israel's Wisdom Literature. Its Bearing on Theology and the History of Religion* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1954), pp. 10, 35f. Harry Ranston, *The Old Testament Wisdom Books and their Teaching* (London: Epworth 1930, p. 23. Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of the Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 17 (March, 1964), pp. 148, 151.

actually became a monarchy under Solomon it partook of the character of the courts of the surrounding powers, particularly Egypt,⁴ in that it cultivated wisdom as part of the court life.⁵ Now, as we shall see~ the relationship to the monarchy is the key, but not for the lock in which it is here used. R. E. Murphy, in almost all of his writings on the Wisdom Literature,⁶ has pointed out that viewing the court training of the royal officials and courtiers as the Sitz im Leben and the source for all the wisdom material is inadequate in that there are some parts of the literature which just cannot be forced to fit into that situation. Even if Murphy's objection is to be over-ruled, the creation-centered alternative is still weak due to the fact that it leaves a very important question unanswered: why is there a parenthesis in the Heilsgeschichte? Or rather, why is there a recorded parenthesis in the Heilsgeschichte? We have parenthesis elsewhere in that story, not the least of which is the era between the Testaments. In contrast, however, nowhere else do we find such a full and well-packed void. In reality such a void is a wrench in the mechanism of the concept of Heilsgeschichte. But rather than abandon the plan and action of God in the process of salvation, the choice of another alternative should be made.

This better option is based upon the historical context which we have accepted above: the reign of Solomon. As is indicated above, there seemed to be a particular correlation between wisdom and royalty.⁷ N. W. Porteous⁸ has probably best shown the association of wisdom and royalty in the Ancient Near East. Beyond the general background of "secular" history, however, we have the particular context of the Promise D1ctrie, for Solomon came to the throne as the "offspring" of David.

⁴We ought to be well aware of the ties which Solomon had with E~Pt. Cf. I Kings 3: 1.

⁵Roland E. Murphy, "The Concept of Wisdom Literature:' in *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought*, ed. by John L. McKenzie (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), p. 47. Ibid., "Introduction to the Wisdom Literature:' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown et al. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 487. Zimmerli, p. 146. Cf. N. W. Porteous, "Royal Wisdom:' in *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. by M. Noth and D. Winston Thomas (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969).

⁶R. E. Murphy, "Assumptions and Problems in Old Testament Wisdom Research:' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 27 (1967), pp. 408f, 412. Ibid., "Introduction:' p. 488f and especially "Concept:' p. 50f. Part of Murphy's objection is based on chronology, for he views much of the material as being post-exilic. If that were true, since there was no king nor court, some of it must derive from a non-courtly setting. Cf. S. H. Blank, "Wisdom," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, IV, p. 856.

⁷See that attribution of wisdom to David in 2 Samuel 14:20.

⁸Porteous, *passim*. Cf. Blank, p. 854. Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, trans. by David E. Arnoed (New York: Abingdon, 1968 ET), p. 308. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. I, Trans. by D. M. G. Stalker, (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 375. Cf. as well Proverbs 25:2.

This is a most significant factor, for one cannot help but think that the development of the Promise in the messianic sense found in 2 Samuel? was a constantly recurring thought in Solomon's mind.⁹ How, though, does this help us to understand the Wisdom Literature as a part of this development? Above, we saw that revelation is generally of two aspects. Thus, might it not be that the Wisdom Literature is to be co-related not with the creation per se but with the Promise of the kingdom? On the basis of the general attribution of wisdom to royalty, as well as the situation of Solomon in relation to the promise made to his father David, could it not be that the Wisdom Literature is actually compilations of Solomon's guides for the satisfying life in the kingdom, a "messianic rule" in which he has tried to actualize his royal and messianic potential?¹⁰ The "why not" is easily seen, for the two problems we began with argue very heavily against this view. If, however, we can overcome these objections, there seems to be good reason to explain the Wisdom Literature in this way: not only because it provides us with an action of God more closely tied to the historical context of its authors than is the creation, but even more so because it frees us from having to postulate and explain the full void in a parenthesis in the Heilsgeschichte.

The first charge against the Wisdom Literature is that of humanism. This in turn revolves to the theological accusation of a lack of divine inspiration, and is made on the grounds that the character of the Wisdom Literature is patently anthropocentric.¹¹ On the basis of this concern for man some have understood wisdom to be just philosophizing about the good life.¹² This type of thinking, however, utterly avoids the religious aspects of wisdom, particularly in the concept "the fear of the Lord." In addition, there is absolutely no cause to see Israel's wisdom as completely secular when that of her neighbors

⁹Note in particular Isaiah 11:2 where the messianic king is said to be granted a spirit of wisdom.

¹⁰Because of the *Sitz im Leben* which we have constructed and the comments of Murphy (see note 6), we do not intend to limit this wisdom to the training of courtiers.

¹¹ Rankin, p. 12.

¹²Baumgartner, p. 212; Murphy, "Concept:" p. 414. cf. "Introduction," p. 488. Kidner seems to be unsure about his feelings on this, for on p. 17 he states that the Wisdom Literature indicates that Old Testament affirms that man can think validly and wisely without special revelation. On p. 38, however, he indicates that wisdom comes by revelation. A distinction in the Wisdom Literature is sometimes made on a chronological basis, with the human and experiential wisdom being pre-exilic and the religious, which includes the concept of the fear of the Lord, coming from after the exile. See William A. Irwin, "The Wisdom Literature:" *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. by Nolan B. Harmon, et al. (New York: Abingdon, 1952), I, p. 215f. But this seems to be based on an evolutionary reconstruction of history: the more religious aspects occur in the more complex passages and the complex follows the simple; therefore, the purely human wisdom was the earlier. This reconstruction, however, is more imaginary than real.

was associated with their particular gods and religion.¹³ A more realistic attitude¹⁴ able to perceive the influence of religion in the literature: as Proverbs 1:7 indicates, wisdom is not purely human. prudence but is founded upon Yahwistic piety; although the content of the wisdom is man-centered, the basis is the presupposition of God. G. von Rad, though, and those who follow him,¹⁵ limit the inspiration of wisdom to this basic level and thus wisdom is still just human experience meditating on the fact of God and the implications of that fact for man in the world. The real problem, however, still remains: we have seen a religious origin for wisdom, but how are we to view wisdom as revelation? As it is pointed out,¹⁶ we do not find an equivalent of the prophetic messenger formula, "thus says Yahweh," in the Wisdom Literature. Is it, however, while in some sense inspired, a Jesus direct revelation¹⁷ or a second class inspiration?¹⁸ If that were the case, we would again be capitulating to the idea of a parenthesis, something below the level of that which is on either side of it in the Heilsgeschichte.

¹³Cf. Ma'at in the Egyptian wisdom.

¹⁴J. B. Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), pp. 56, 176. Ranston, p. 28. Henry Wheeler Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), pp. 239, 245. John C. Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1946), p. 11. Cf. Blank, p. 860. Irwin, p. 215. Hermann Schultz, *Old Testament Theology, Vol, II*, trans. by J. A. Paterson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1892), p.84.

¹⁵von Rad, Pp. 418ff. Cf. Irwin, p. 215. Murphy, "Introduction," p. 493. Ranston, pp. 23, 29.

¹⁶C. H. Toy, "Wisdom Literature:" *Encyclopedia Biblica* ed. by t. K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland (London; Adam & Chas. Black, 1907), IV, p. 5329. This is Toy's idea although not his phraseology.

¹⁷Robinson, pp. 231, 246f,

¹⁸Ranston, p. 28. There is a statement made in 2 Samuel 16:23 which describes the counsel of Ahithophel in the words "as if one had consulted the Oracle of God." This seems to distinguish the counsel of the wise from any full and true revelation. But here we need to distinguish in turn the Wisdom Literature, which derives from Solomon and several others, from any class of wise men. The fact is that we have no such class of men. attested in Israel until long after the time of the writing of the canonical wisdom.. for the references of Jeremiah and Ezekiel date from the sixth 'century B.C. and Solomon was the tenth. The example of Ahithophel himself does not prove such an existent class or tradition of wisdom at that time either, (In contrast, however, note the apparent class of f8T1alesagesat Abel before and/or during the time of David: 2 Samuel 20: 16-22.) Nor do we have references attesting such a class in the surrounding nations for that specific time. Thus we cannot say "Ahithophel was a wise man in the technical sense as was Solomon. Therefore just as Ahithophel's wisdom was less than revelation, so was Solomon's Proverbs 22:17 should be mentioned here, for in that verse we find the phrase *dibre chakamim*.. It is possible that this refers to such a class, although it does not do so necessarily, for just as the Proverbs were collected some time after they had been written so this could possibly an editorial insertion referring to Solomon and those others included in the special burst of wisdom at his time, To insist upon such an explanation, however, would be a case of special pleading and we must recognize what potential difficulty the phrase presents to our theory of limiting wisdom to the Solomonic era, if it can be shown that the phrase does refer to a specific class and its traditions. Note, too, in this regard the possible implicit reference to such a class in I Kings 4:29ff.

Going back to Solomon's historical situation may again be the clue to the problem. According to 1 Kings 3 the wisdom of Solomon was a gift from God. This ability does not seem to be just a form, a framework of presuppositions into which Solomon put the content which he derived from experience; rather it is in itself content. This is a rather bold assertion, but the use of the term *chakam* throughout the Old Testament supports it, particularly where the word means "skilled." The artisans who worked on the tabernacle for example (cf. Exodus 36:2) are not only possessors of the presuppositions for talent, a creative brain, well-controlled muscles and the like, but the talent itself. This interpretation of *chakam* is substantiated by the reference in Proverbs 2:6 which states that the Lord gives wisdom¹⁹ and by parallelism equates this wisdom to the content-filled categories of "knowledge" and "understanding." If this wisdom is then at least in some sense content-oriented, what is the difference between it and the inspiration or revelation granted to other authors in the Bible?²⁰ Obviously, there is none save in the lack of direct claim to inspiration.

Even if we are to accept this solution to the difficulty of seeing legitimate revelation in the writings of Solomon, it does not solve the problem for the whole of the wisdom corpus due to the fact that there are other writers beside Solomon, notably Agur, Lemuel and the author of Job. How are we to account for their work in this regard? One possible answer which might suffice for the first two is the parallel we find in the New Testament. Just as Solomon prefigured Jesus as the Messiah (a theme to be developed below) he likewise might as well have attracted disciples (cf. 1 Kings 10:22 and the parallel in Chronicles). Jesus was renowned for his wisdom and a corresponding wisdom seems to have been granted to his disciples, for we notice particularly the Synoptic parallel in Matthe.w 23:34ff and Luke 11:49 where the former reads "prophets and wise men" while the latter has "prophets and apostles"; thus the equation of apostles and wise men. Might it be, then, that Agur and Lemuel were disciples, in a sense, of Solomon, and by virtue of their relationship with him were granted wisdom? It is obvious that the answer to the problem here suggested is very tenuous and possibly unsatisfactory. Moreover it completely lacks the ability to deal with Job because of the lack of any ostensible

¹⁹This might be corroborated if we knew how soon 1 Kings 3:16ff followed upon 1 Kings 3:3ff, for in verse 7 Solomon claims to be a young and immature person. If it was only the presupposition for wisdom that was granted to him, and if the second pericope followed immediately after the incidents of the first, there would have been no time for Solomon to fill in the framework with content, and thus the initial gift would have to have included content. However, since we do not know the exact temporal inter-relationships of these two incidents this argument is of no value.

²⁰Cf. 1 Kings 10:24. We might also insert here an appeal to 2 Timothy 3:16 as support for the conclusion.

relationship with Solomon.²¹ Nevertheless, having referred to the 2 Timothy passage, in note 20, we can assert that although we do not know the reason or method of this inspiration, we must support its existence.

Consequently, the only reason for not allowing inspiration derives from the argument that the writings do not claim revelation or direct inspiration. Proverbs 2:6, mentioned above as stating that wisdom is the gift of God, might be disregarded due to the fact that rain and sunshine are likewise gifts of God: i.e., that that reference does not show a distinction between what has been termed the common grace of God and his special grace in the act of inspiration, the latter being what we are seeking to demonstrate. In contrast, however, there is a final fact which we must consider, and that is that the negative viewpoint here rests upon an argument from silence: inspiration is not claimed, therefore it does not exist. This logical device, though commonly used in the reconstruction of biblical history, is quite prone to fallacy. In consequence, it should be reckoned to be at least as tenuous as the arguments advanced for the full inspiration of the literature, especially in light of 2 Timothy.

A transitional theme is that of the existence in the ancient Near East of a common tradition of wisdom we find wisdom both in Mesopotamia and Egypt.²² Solomon is even compared with other wise men,²³ which would indicate a quantitative rather than a qualitative distinction between them. In fact, recent study seems to show that Proverbs 22: 17-24:23 is dependent upon an Egyptian work, the Wisdom of Amen-em-ope, which is almost surely from an earlier date than the biblical text.²⁴ In light of this whole aspect of universality, how can wisdom be regarded as divinely inspired? The first thing to note is that the

²¹cf. pp. 12f of this article.

²²Irwin, p. 212. Murphy, "Assumptions:" p. 416f. Ibid.. "Introduction:" p. 488. Robinson, p. 90.

²³ 1 Kings 4:29ff. Cf. in particular the Supplements to Vetus Testament Vol. III from which two articles have been cited above.

²⁴Gleason L. Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 457f, has reacted against the concept of borrowing by following Kevin and deriving, on linguistic arguments, the Egyptian wisdom work from Solomon's writings. One of his basic contentions was that the Wisdom of Amen-em-ope was to be dated from the Persian or Greek period and was thus unavailable for Solomon to borrow in the tenth century B. C. R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 1014f, however, refers to some ostraca evidence which would push the date back significantly before Solomon. Both authors rightly show that the conjectural emendation of Proverbs 22:20 *shalishim* to *shalushim*, referring to the thirty chapters of Amen-em-ope is unjustified. Both as well point out that only about 30% of Proverbs 22-24 corresponds to Amen-em-ope. The situation remains, however, that even if (without granting the point) there is borrowing on the part of the canonical wisdom, this borrowing is not done without significant modification of the material borrowed. Cf. note 26 below.

wise man, be it Solomon or another, never borrowed without modification. This is even true for the section of Proverbs just mentioned.²⁵ In fact, the character of Scripture as a whole lies in just such a tendency: it is never divorced from its environment, but correspondingly, it is never completely molded by it either. We should also recognize that some of Jesus' sayings might not have been original to him.²⁶ Thus if this partial dependence on the setting is a problem for the Wisdom Literature, it is a problem for the whole of Scripture, for rarely does the dictation theory of inspiration explain the nature of the inspiration process.

In spite of the fact, however, that universalism is no threat to a view on the inspiration of the wisdom literature, it is a grave hazard on the path towards fitting this literature into the Heilsgeschichte of epangelicalism.²⁷ The character of the Wisdom Literature is so universal that it seems at first glance to bear no resemblance~to this tradition of the Promise in at least three areas: 1) the lack of reference to or association with the chosen nation of Israel; 2) the ignorance or the ignoring of the Law and the cult; and 3) the lack of any messianic content. It is apparent that the ubiquitous argument from silence is the major factor in the discussion again, and so we must be warned at the outset of its inherent weakness, especially in light of some not-so-silent passages.

The contrast which has been found between the Israel-centered viewpoint of the Promise theology immediately preceding the time of Solomon and the universal or gnomic outlook of the Wisdom Literature has been a major factor in causing it to be shunted aside in the progress of revelation.²⁸ But a look at the historical context will hopefully weaken if not destroy this contrast. Again we must look to the promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7. There, in the use of the phrase '*ad 'olam*' which is I found there in verses 13, 24, etc., I think a beginning has been made towards a universal outlook by means of the temporal extension of the promise, even though this view is still highly ethnocentric.²⁹ The temporal aspect is extended to a true universal view in Psalm 72: in verses 5-7, the concept is temporal

²⁵ Fohrer, p. 308. Rankin, p. 8. Robinson, p. 237.

²⁶ See the discussion of Jesus and wisdom in William Barclay, *The First Three Gospels* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), pp. 72-85, especially page 81. This treatment, however, is dependent upon Bultmannian radical form criticism and thus should be used with caution. See as well the comment in note 24 concerning the amount of parallel material between Proverbs and Amen-em-ope.

²⁷ Cf. Murphy, "Assumptions," p. 413.

²⁸ Baumgartner, p. 211. Rylaarsdam, p. 20. Zimmerli, p. 147.

²⁹ Psalm 89, the commentary on 2 Samuel 7, likewise has this temporal aspect, but the additional emphasis is not so much on the nation but her law.

extension, but subsequent to this, in verses 8-1 , we find a geographical extension. This Psalm parallels much of what is related in the historical books concerning Solomon, and it appears as if he is the immediate referent.³⁰ It, therefore, Solomon was controlling large areas of territory other than Israel, as the aspect of tribute in verse 10 of that Psalm would indicate I think we can see a reason for a universal perspective. Solomon, if he was promulgating a way of life for the subjects of his realm as is our thesis, would have to have been supra-national in outlook. The main point to notice is not that there is no direct relationship to Israel, but that there is no outright rejection of Israel. Since this universal or gnomic view is not antithetic to the Israelite heritage, might not the latter therefore be tacitly presupposed by the books of wisdom? If the historical reconstruction given is valid, there is no reason why this could not be the case.

In addition, we ought to realize that this silence about Israel is only true in the, book of Proverbs, for both Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs reveal the geographical centrality of Israel in their thought. Song of Songs best exemplifies the character which we would like to see as true of the whole corpus of the Wisdom Literature in that the poetry in that book often mentions locations in the traditional territory of Israel: Jerusalem (1:5; 3:5; 3: 10; 6:4), or parts of it Zion (3: 1) and the Tower of David (4:4); En-Gedi (1: 14); Sharon (2: 1); Gilead (4:1; 6:5); Tirzeh (6:4);Heshbon (7:4); Bath-rabbim (7:4); and Carmel (7:4). But the lyric ,bursts beyond these boundaries into areas like Lebanon (3:9; 4:8; 4: 15; 5: 15; 7:4); Hermon (4:8); Amana (4:5); and Damascus (7:4). The absolute alienation of the wisdom corpus from the Israelite state cannot be justified in light of evidence such as this.³¹

A second aspect of the problem is the lack of ostensible relationship with the Law and the cult of Israel.³² As with the nation, so with the Law, only more so: instead of scattered references in the former case, we find no reference to the Law in

³⁰ Nevertheless, the Psalm, because of its hyperbolic elements, takes on a messianic import.

³¹ Job again is the weak point in the argument.

³² Otto J. Baab, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949), p. 73, uses this to establish the literature's post-exilic dating. This is strange, for the strength of the cult after the exile was greater than it was before, in that the cult received the whole allegiance of the people not divided with the monarchy as had been previously.

the Wisdom Literature.³³ A number of authors,³⁴ however, have seen a possible relation between Deuteronomy, particularly chapter 4, and the wisdom writings. In that section it is written that 1) obedience to the Law is a pre-requisite for life (verse 1) and 2) that the Law is the "wisdom" of the people (verse 6). While the second aspect is very interesting and illuminating as regards the co-relation of the two categories, it is the former which is most helpful in showing the possible relationships between them. Throughout Proverbs we find statements parallel to that of Deuteronomy 4:1: note for example Proverbs 3:22, "wisdom. ..will be life for your soul." In the same line of thought see also 4:22; 8:35;³⁵ 14:27. (Cf. 12:28). The ideas expressed are almost identical. Thus if, according to Deuteronomy 4:6, the Law is wisdom, perhaps "wisdom" was the term used by Solomon .as a more inclusive category (and perhaps as one lacking the connotations of exclusivism in the term "Law" (?)). Moreover it ought to be noted that there is never a contradiction or rejection of the Law. No obstacle bars us, therefore, from again claiming that Solomon is tacitly assuming .the content of revelation preceding him.

The cult, however, is not covertly presupposed. Almost all aspects of the cultic life are referred to: sacrifices (Proverbs 15:8;³⁶ 21:3, 27; and Job 1:5; 42:9³⁷); prayers (Proverbs 15: 29; 28: 9; Ecclesiastes 5:4-6); vows (Proverbs 20:25; Ecclesiastes 5 :4-6)' and perhaps even the concepts of first-fruits (Proverbs 3:9) and ritual purity {Proverbs 30: 12).³⁸ There is

³³ Even though the word torah is not without its appearance in the Wisdom Literature, at least in Proverbs. In the number of references in which it occurs, the majority are of the more general sense, "teaching" or "instruction" (1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:23; 7:2; 13:14). Several occurrences in chapter 28, however, (verses 4, 7 and 9) seem to have a little more specific meaning. Nevertheless, even those lack an absolute reference to the Mosaic Law and thus some have argued that the Law does not appear in the Wisdom Literature. Further study of the 28th chapter is necessary to determine the point.

³⁴ Particularly Murphy who sees a relationship to Deuteronomy in the hortatory style of Proverbs ("Introduction:' p. 493) and in the objective of the content in the ideal of the "good life" ("Concept:' p. 57). He does point out, however, that there is a distinct difference between the two in that Deuteronomy is mainly legal in character. Cf. Rylaarsdam, p. 23.

³⁵ Cf. Payne, p. 243.

³⁶ von Rad, p. 396 talks of a spiritualizing of the cult in the Wisdom Literature, probably having a verse like Proverbs 15:8 in mind. This, however, seems not to be the case particularly in light of passages such as I Samuel 15:22..

³⁷ Although Job does speak of sacrifices, it is not in the national cultic sense which we find in the history of Israel, for Job himself performs the sacrifices, more in line with patriarchal custom. It is significant, however, that Solomon seems to have .offered sacrifices at the dedication of the Temple. Cf. I Kings 8:62ff.

³⁸ Fohrer, p. 314, relates the cult and wisdom in a further way by juxtaposing the *asherti* of the Wisdom Literature with the *barod* of the cult. A survey of the vocabulary of the wisdom corpus would discount that association, for neither term is used exclusively by one group of writings. While *asherti* is rare but not unknown in the rest of the Old Testament, *barod* appears almost as frequently as *ashert* in the Wisdom Literature.

apparently even a reference to the Temple (Ecclesiastes 5:1). Other cultic forms, such as the Sabbath and circumcision, could then be assumed to be taken for granted even though they are not explicitly discussed.³⁹ Consequently the problem is not the non-appearance of the cult and its component parts, but the relatively unimportant place that it occupies in the Wisdom Literature. But is that a problem? It only becomes so if we insist that the Wisdom Literature must emphasize the cult as much as the pre-wisdom literature even though the purposes of the different writers were different. But if Solomon's purpose was to portray, the moral and practical ideals of the messianic kingdom, why must the cult necessarily be as major a factor as it is elsewhere?

The major area of Israel's religious thinking had to do with the cult and with the Law. A minor area, however, which ought to be considered separately from them is Old Testament messianism. How is it that this finds no place in the Wisdom Literature? And, since it is "absent," ought we to regard that literature as an example of common grace looking backwards to the creation? Messianism, properly speaking, began with the promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. Thus in answer to the questions just posed, could we not say that it was so novel and undeveloped an idea that nobody paid any attention to it? Not if we give any credence to the quotation of Psalm 110 in Matthew 22:41-5. There the idea of messianism is surely brought back to the time of David and shown to be a concern of his mind. How then is it that this feeling seems to be missing from the documents of wisdom? The whole point, however, is that it is not absent, for it forms the foundation on which they lie. If Solomon thought that he was the Messiah⁴⁰ (perhaps not with that terminology, but with its content) or even only the type of that Messiah, either of which would only be natural in light of the way he did prefigure the Messiah and his reign,⁴¹ the

³⁹Toy, p. 5327. Kidner, p. 33f states that the terminology of the Wisdom Literature relates to the covenant people (although without any example or citation in support of his claim) and on this basis claims that the Wisdom Literature assumes the covenant relationship but deals with Man, not man as first assumed to be Israelite. von Rad, p. 394, seems to use the quality of individualism found in the books of wisdom to distinguish it from the corporate concepts of the earlier revelation. Individualism is not absent from that previous literature, as shown by Deuteronomy 24:16.

⁴⁰One hindrance to the useful functioning of the Wisdom Literature in the life of the believer might be viewed as depending upon Solomon's self-estimation. If this literature is in fact Solomon's guide for his reign which he considered messianic, what can we do with such literature when we know that he was not the Messiah? Is not the credibility of the literature dependent upon the credibility of the source? One possible reply would attribute to Solomon not a messianic self-consciousness but a typological messianic self-consciousness. But even if no appeal is made to such a concept, Solomon's error concerning himself does not necessarily invalidate the literature. The wisdom was given by God and it is thus descriptive of the ideal situation of the messianic kingdom even though Solomon was not the Messiah.

⁴¹That there was reason for Solomon to think thus see above on the messianic Psalm 72. Solomon did most of what was predicted of the Messiah in 2 Samuel 7 except, of course, rule forever. Note, too, that Solomon Was anointed (I Kings 1 :39).

Wisdom Literature be-comes the outpouring of teaching from that messianic figure: the exhortation to a moral and wise life is thus the "Messianic Rule." There seems to be nothing which would contradict that point of view.

On the contrary, there may even be something to confirm it, for in both 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89 God proclaims that David's offspring would be a son to Him, and He would be his father. Perhaps this messianic relationship stands behind the constant reference in Proverbs which make use of the vocative epithet "my son" (1:8,10; 2:1; 3:1,21; 4:10,20; 5:1; 6:1; and 7:1. Cf. Ecclesiastes 12:2). This view is tempting, especially when the speaker voicing that phrase also refers to "my commandments" (3: 1). But it probably is just the human relationship which is the direct setting, not only because "son" sometimes occurs in the plural (4: 1; 5:7; 8:32), but more because the father' who speaks is juxtaposed with a mother (6:20). Even if there is no direct reference to the messianic relationship, it might be that we are dealing with a typological comment in the same manner as 2 Samuel 7. There we find a statement that God will punish David's offspring if he sins, even though the ultimate referent of that promise is Christ the sinless one. So, as in this latter passage, we could have here a phrase which, though directly referring to a human situation, is ultimately messianic. Discarding that possibility even of the typological level,^{4 2} however we return to a lack of reference to messianism only to say that such a statement of messianic belief would be unnecessary if the writer thought his writing to be a visible and concrete expression of that messianism.

The drawback of the over-all reconstruction ought to be obvious, for there exists an open inability to account for the book of Job, a work which some even consider to be the peak of Old Testament wisdom. If, perchance, the story, while dating in content from the time of the patriarchs, was written later, would it not be possible to attribute the casting of that story into its present literary form to be the work of Solomon or one of his followers? In that case, while the story would have existed previously, it would have been adapted in the Solomonic era to add yet one more facet to the messianic teaching. The weakness of this attempt to overcome the difficulty is that it would

⁴²In reckoning the father-son relationship described in Proverbs not to be descriptive of that between Yahweh and his anointed king, we have made difficult the answer to another question (cf. Rylaarsdam, p. 26): why is there lacking in the Wisdom Literature the emphasis on the mercy of God or the love of God which we find so effluvisly expressed in the early messianic passages of the Old Testament, 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89. Again, however, it must be stated that the existence of the literature itself is a testimony to that love and mercy, for if God had not put Solomon in the position he did, which was an act of love and mercy, then there would have been no reason for the literature.

necessitate an ad hoc creation of non-existent facts to fit the theory and for that cause it is perhaps the 'major thorn in the flesh' of our thesis.

But that is not the situation for the other objections, for neither is the case that the Wisdom Literature is in some sense uninspired or not in contact with revelation, nor is it true that the absence or relative rarity of some facets of *Heilsgeschichte* forces it out of the picture in the reconstruction of that *Heilsgeschichte*. Because it does betray an awareness of its own indebtedness to divine action, it becomes a part of the history of redemption. And because it fits quite well as the Word explaining by example the significance and implications of the messianic promise given in 2 Samuel 7, and is not deferred from that by its apparent lack of connection with the preceding part of the history, it is not just a parenthesis in that history. Instead it becomes an integral part of the Promise theology portraying the ideal character of the citizen of the messianic kingdom when "righteousness flourishes": this literature provides the specifics, the practical applications, showing in just what ways the prudent or righteous person can actualize the wish of the psalmist of Psalm 72:7 alluded to above.

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