

# THEOLOGIA BIBLICA

Bálint Károly Zabán\*

Belfast (Queen's University)

## A Survey of Present Research of Proverbs 1–9

### Introduction

The following survey of present research of Prov 1–9 focuses mainly on the structure and character of these chapters of Proverbs and the various theories concerning the personification of Wisdom in Proverbs.<sup>1</sup> This appraisal of some older and more recent works on chapters 1–9 is meant to serve as a preamble of a series of articles I planned to write about Proverbs. The succeeding articles will be concerned with an overview of research in terms of the textual traditions of Proverbs, questions of dating (pre-exilic/post-exilic), setting, various Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Ugaritic parallels and the structure and character of Prov 10–29 and of 30–31, secular and/or religious wisdom, the concept of the fear of the Lord and theology.

### The Structure and Character of Proverbs 1–9

The first Hebrew superscription of the book in question in the Hebrew Bible is *משלי שלמה*, “Proverbs of Solomon,” being part of the *כתובים* section of the Tanakh.<sup>2</sup> This provided the actual name of the book as a whole, confirmed by the same titles of the ancient versions, *מחלי דשלמה* in the Tg, *حکمة سليمان* in the Syr. and *παροιμια Σαλωμωντος* in the LXX.

Scholars of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have already recognized the fact that, on the basis of certain variations in the style and at a certain degree in the character and intention, Prov 1–9 constitutes a somewhat different section when compared with the remainder of the book of Proverbs (10:1ff). The most important commentaries published in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were the ones written by E. Bertheau,<sup>3</sup> C.

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\* Bálint Károly Zabán (RO – Arad, 1980) commenced his PhD studies in 2005 at *The Queen's University of Belfast*, which he successfully completed in late November 2008. In 2007 he obtained qualifications in Biblical Aramaic and Syriac. He is a member of *The Society for Old Testament Study (SOTS)*, *Tyndale Fellowship Cambridge (TF)*, the *European Association of Biblical Studies (EABS)* and the *Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)*.

<sup>1</sup> I am greatly indebted to Professor J. Patton Taylor and Dr. James Williamson who read this article and provided me with valuable suggestions in terms of the necessary grammatical corrections.

<sup>2</sup> In the ensuing treatment, I consistently employ the term “Hebrew Bible” instead of Old Testament, out of the conviction that one primarily is dealing with the holy writings of the Jewish community of faith. Therefore, by this usage I simply intend to do justice to the fact that this book should be treated first and foremost as the sacred book of the Jewish community of faith and secondarily as part of the Christian canon of Holy Scriptures. See further the section entitled *Old Testament Theology in Relation to Jewish Tradition and the Jewish Community* in Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1997), 733–5.

<sup>3</sup> E. Bertheau, *Die Sprüche Salomo's* (KEHAT 7. Lieferung; Leipzig: 1847), V–112.

Bridges,<sup>4</sup> T. K. Cheyne,<sup>5</sup> E. Elster,<sup>6</sup> H. Ewald,<sup>7</sup> W. Frankenberg,<sup>8</sup> F. Hitzig,<sup>9</sup> A. Kamphausen,<sup>10</sup> J. D. Michaelis,<sup>11</sup> A. Schultens,<sup>12</sup> Hermann Ludwig Strack,<sup>13</sup> C. H. Toy,<sup>14</sup> and G. Wildeboer.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the widespread opinion was that Prov 1–9 constitutes a prologue to the book of Proverbs. Accordingly this prologue was thought to be the latest part of the book that furnishes a particular didactic tone to the entire book presenting it as a textbook for the parental instructions concerned with the education of the youth in a process of acquisition of wisdom and virtue. In terms of stylistic resemblances of Prov 1–9 and other parts of the book, Delitzsch noted the similarities between chapters 1–9 and 22:17–24:22.<sup>16</sup> It was again Delitzsch who

<sup>4</sup> C. Bridges, *An Exposition of the Book of Proverbs Second Edition* (London: 1847).

<sup>5</sup> T. K. Cheyne, *Job and Solomon or The Wisdom of the Old Testament* (London: 1887).

<sup>6</sup> E. Elster, *Commentar über die Salomonischen Sprüche* (Göttingen: 1858).

<sup>7</sup> H. Ewald, *Die Dichter des Alten Bundes II: Die Salomonischen Schriften* (Göttingen: 1867).

<sup>8</sup> W. Frankenberg, *Die Sprüche* (HK... hg. Von D. W. Nowack, II. Abtheilung, Die poetischen Bücher, 3. Band, 1. Theil: Göttingen: 1898).

<sup>9</sup> F. Hitzig, *Die Sprüche Salomos* (Zürich: 1858).

<sup>10</sup> A. Kamphausen, "Die Sprüche," in *Vollständiges Bibelwerk für die Gemeinde. In drei Abteilungen. Von Christian Carl Josias Bunsen. Erste Abtheilung: Die Bibel. Übersetzung und Erklärung, Dritter Theil: Die Schriften* (Leipzig: 1868), 281–394.

<sup>11</sup> J. D. Michaelis, *Deutsche Übersetzung des Alten Testaments mit Anmerkungen für Ungelehrte. Die siebente Theil, welcher die Sprüche und den Prediger Salomons enthält* (Göttingen: 1778).

<sup>12</sup> A. Schultens, *Proverbia Salomonis. Versionem integram ad hebraeorum fontem expressit, atque commentarium adjectit Albertus Schultens* (Lugduni Batavorum [Leiden]: 1748).

<sup>13</sup> Hermann Ludwig Strack, *Die Sprüche Salomos* (Kurzgefaßter Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments..., hg. Von H. L. Strack und O. Zöckler, A. Alten Testament. 6. Abteilung, 2. Hälfte; München: 1899).

<sup>14</sup> Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Proverbs* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1899). For further commentaries written in the twentieth century see further W. Gunther Plaut, *Book of Proverbs: A Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1941); A. Cohen, *Proverbs: Hebrew Text & English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* (Hindhead: The Soncino Press, 1945); Julius H. Greenstone, *Proverbs with Commentary* (HC; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 5711–1950).

<sup>15</sup> G. Wildeboer, *Die Sprüche* (KHC, Abteilung XV; Freiburg i.B./Leipzig/Tübingen: 1897). Cf. M. Geier, *Proverbia regum sapientissimi Salomonis cum cura enucleata* (Leipzig: 1653); *Commentaria in Proverbia et Ecclesiasten Salomonis* . . . (Amsterdam: 1696).

<sup>16</sup> R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study* (HBIS 1; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 62. Cf. F. Delitzsch, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon* (COTTV 6; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 23, 36, 95. For a further survey of the main points of discussion in Prov 1–9 see further James D. Martin, *Proverbs* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 33–50. For a more general survey of Proverbs scholarship in the 1990s see further Knut Holter, "Old Testament Proverbs Studies in the 1990s," *Newsletter of African Old Testament Scholarship* 6 (1999). Available online at: <http://www.itanakh.org/texts/tanakh/writings/proverbs/index.htm>. An additional survey is also provided by James L. Crenshaw, entitled "The Wisdom Literature," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* (eds. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker; SBLCP; Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1985), 374–7; James L. Crenshaw, "Wisdom Literature: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on his Seventieth Birthday* (eds. Heather A. McKay and David J. A. Clines; JSOTSup 162; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 161–78; Peter Enns, *Poetry & Wisdom* (IBR Bibliographies No. 3; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997); Claus Westermann, *Forschungsgeschichte zur Weisheitsliteratur 1950–1990* (Abhandlungen zur Theologie 71; Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1991); Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm., "Assumptions and Problems in Old Testament Wisdom Research," *CBQ* 29/3 (1967): 407–18; Gerald T. Sheppard, "Biblical Wisdom Literature at the End of the Modern Age," in *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (eds. A. Lemaire and M. Sæbo; VTSup 80; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 369–98.

tackled the structure of Prov 1–9 as a unified composition of fifteen *Maschallieder* (mashal songs) or *Lebrdichtungen* (didactic poems).<sup>17</sup>

The fact that Egyptian and other ancient-near-eastern wisdom texts retain similarities with Proverbs led to the commencement of a new era in the study of the book in question. The affinities discovered between Proverbs and ancient-near-eastern wisdom texts, such as the proximity between Prov 22:17–24:22 and *The Instruction of Amenemope*,<sup>18</sup> contributed to a new search for existing parallels between international wisdom literature and additional sections of Proverbs, including chapter 1–9. These investigations were carried out by such scholars as W. O. E. Oesterley,<sup>19</sup> P. Humbert<sup>20</sup> and H. Duesberg.<sup>21</sup>

The first separate and detailed investigation of Prov 1–9 was that of A. Robert.<sup>22</sup> The deficiency of Robert's treatment is that he does not refer to any similarities between chapters 1–9 and other ancient-near-eastern wisdom texts. His interest lay in examining chapters 1–9 in the light of Israel's own religious traditions as it is formulated especially in Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Robert made a good case by emphasizing the pedagogical character of all these texts, highlighting his view that the figure of Wisdom in Prov 1 and 8 retains "messianic" aspects.<sup>23</sup> Building on the relationship and connections between Prov 1–9 and Deuteronomy, G. Buchanan later suggested that chapters 1–9 may be viewed as Midrashic.<sup>24</sup>

In 1964, a seminal commentary on Proverbs was published, written by A. Barucq.<sup>25</sup> Barucq made extensive use of not only the most well-known and used versions of the texts of Proverbs such as the Tg, Syr. and LXX but also of the Coptic texts. Following the argumentation of Duesberg, he also made a distinction between the subversive scribes often criticized in the prophetic corpus and those who promoted sound wisdom. One of the strong points of his commentary is, that apart from his

<sup>17</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 62; Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 12; Otto Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)* (BKAT 17; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 3.

<sup>18</sup> E. W. Budge, *Second Series of Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum Plates I–XIV* (London: 1923); *The Teaching of Amen-em-apt, Son of Kanakbt* (London: 1924); A. Erman, "Eine ägyptische Quelle der 'Sprüche Salomos,'" *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse* 15 (1924): 86–93; H. Gressmann, "Die neugefundene Lehre des Amen-em-ope und die vorexilische Spruchdichtung Israels," *ZAW* 42 (1924): 272–96. Cf. Bruce K. Waltke and David Diewert, "Wisdom Literature," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (eds. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold; Leicester: Apollos, 1999), 302.

<sup>19</sup> W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Egypt* (1927); *The Book of Proverbs with Introduction and Notes* (WC; London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1929), xxxiii–lv.

<sup>20</sup> P. Humbert, *Recherches* (1929).

<sup>21</sup> Hilaire Duesberg, *Les Scribes Inspirés: Introduction aux Livres Sapientiaux de la Bible. Le Livre des Proverbes* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938); second edition with I. Franssen (Abbaye de Maredsous: Editions de Maredsous, 1966).

<sup>22</sup> A. Robert, "Les attaches littéraires bibliques de Proverbes i–ix," *RB* 43 (1934): 42–68, 172–204, 374–84; 44 (1935): 344–65, 502–25. Cf. Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets* (JSOTSup 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 84–88.

<sup>23</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 62–3. For an additional evaluation of Robert see further F.-J. Steiert, *Die Weisheit Israels – ein Fremdkörper im Alten Testament? Eine untersuchung zum Buch der Sprüche auf dem Hintergrund der ägyptischen Weisheitslehren* (FThS 143; Freiburg, 1990), 260–1, 264, 267, 269.

<sup>24</sup> G. W. Buchanan, "Midrashim prétannaites: à propos de Prov., I–IX," *RB* 72 (1965): 227–39. Cf. Stuart Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1–9* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 103, n. 8. Cf. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation*, 146.

<sup>25</sup> André Barucq, *Le Livre des Proverbes* (SB; Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, Éditeurs, 1964).

comments on the text, he furnishes valuable treatments of various theological aspects too, such as retribution, the theme of justice and wisdom, the fruits of wisdom etc.

D. Kidner's succinct but valuable commentary furnished some valuable insights into various features of Proverbs.<sup>26</sup> Par excellence, his treatments of the three speeches of Wisdom (1:20–33; 8:1–36; 9:1–6) offer substantial theological insights such as the reasoning behind Wisdom's anger in her first speech, the role of Wisdom's banquet invitation etc. In terms of the debate about the exact meaning of the term *חָנָן* in 8:30a, which I discuss in the following section of this survey, whether it means "artisan, work master" or "nursling," he states that the meaning "artisan" is perfectly intelligible, because without it there would be no allusions to wisdom's instrumentality. The meaning "nursling" would also be feasible and would befit the sequence commencing with birth (8:24) to joyous play (8:30b, 31) but this latter rendering would turn Wisdom's role into something entirely "irresponsible" and if it is done so, to "...avoid unduly exalting her, it is overdone."<sup>27</sup>

Somewhat varying from Robert's approach, P. W. Skehan defined the structure of Prov 1–9 in architectural terms.<sup>28</sup> Skehan based the starting point of his examination on the statement of Prov 9:1: "Wisdom has built her house." Thus he suggested that Wisdom's house is basically the structure of Prov 1–9. The "seven columns" of Wisdom's house are actually the seven poems encountered in Prov 2–7, whilst Prov 1 and 8–9 build a framework round the whole work. This hypothesis, in which one is not sure how much is metaphor and how much is meant to be construed literally, has been embraced in some shape or form in a few studies.<sup>29</sup>

R. N. Whybray in his study proffered a critical examination of the genre and character of Prov 1–9 in an unpublished Oxford dissertation in 1962.<sup>30</sup> An abbreviated version of this dissertation was published in 1965<sup>31</sup> and additional notes on Prov 2, 7 and 8:32–36 in 1966.<sup>32</sup> R. B. Y. Scott in his commentary on Proverbs and Qoheleth, which was published in 1965,<sup>33</sup> independently from Whybray, arrived at similar conclusions in terms of the structure of Prov 1–9. According to Whybray, Scott's treatment is devoid of a detailed analysis of the grounds on which he based his assumptions.<sup>34</sup>

In general the material in Prov 1–9 has been divided into two main groups, namely the parental appeals addressed to the son or pupil on one hand and the self-glorifying speeches of Wisdom on the other. Both groupings are preceded by the preamble in 1:1–7. Whybray's attempt was to proffer a viable explanation for all this material within a

<sup>26</sup> Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964).

<sup>27</sup> Kidner, *Proverbs*, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick W. Skehan, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom* (CBQMS 1; Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1971). Cf. Crenshaw, "The Wisdom Literature," 375.

<sup>29</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 63.

<sup>30</sup> R. N. Whybray, *The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs I–IX* (PhD diss., Oxford, 1962).

<sup>31</sup> R. N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9* (SBT 45; London: SCM Press, 1965); *The Book of Proverbs: Commentary* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1972); *Proverbs* (NCBC; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1994). Cf. Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985), 41–3.

<sup>32</sup> R. N. Whybray, "Some Literary Problems in Proverbs I–IX," *VT* 16 (1966): 482–96.

<sup>33</sup> R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 18; Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965).

<sup>34</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 63.

“definite structure.”<sup>35</sup> Whybray employed both literary criticism and form criticism, on the basis of which he recognized the presence of ten “discourses” of roughly the same form and length uttered by the teacher. Each discourse retains its separate introduction calling on the pupil to hear and obey the father’s teaching, followed by a main section and frequently by a clear conclusion. Whybray’s deduction was that, despite the fact that these parental appeals have features which indicate their specifically Israelite character, they were, not only in form but to a large degree even in context, grounded on the tradition of the Egyptian instructions, stemming from a similar educational setting. Whybray’s theory was that the majority of these discourses had been abridged at a later stage by interpolated or appended material. Some of this later material or “expansions” were “scraps of additional teaching,” often resembling the material encountered in the sentence literature of Proverbs. Apparently these expansions were interpolated without any particular “*Tendenz*” and they were fairly distinguishable from the original discourses. Further “extensive additions” have also been inserted in two stages for “particular purposes.” The first group of such extensive additions was preoccupied with the augmentation of the authority and persuasiveness of the teacher by upholding that his teaching was not only a mere outcome of ordinary human experience. This augmentation is highlighted by the creation of the figure of personified Wisdom presented either in full or partial personification as a female character who furnishes “life,” i.e. wealth and success, to the pupil. The pupil was expected to “embrace” this Wisdom as a bride. The second stage of extensive additions was apparently of a theological nature. These additions claimed that Wisdom was an attribute of God himself. The life offered by Wisdom was basically God’s gift and became accessible through the fear of God, which was considered the “essence of Wisdom.” The three speeches of Wisdom in 1:20–33; 8:1–36 and 9:1–6 constitute the leading part of these additions. Whybray’s theory was that these speeches were also the result of a twofold stage, the second of which affirms the existing proximity between Wisdom and God.<sup>36</sup>

Independently from Whybray, C. Kayatz reached similar results showing that the discourses or “units” of instruction of Prov 1–9 were prepossessed in form and to a large degree in theme by the genre of the Egyptian instruction.<sup>37</sup> Whybray deems that although Kayatz furnished an extensive analysis of the genre of the Egyptian instruction, she failed to offer a detailed form-critical examination of the instruction encountered in Prov 1–9.<sup>38</sup> As much as this final point may be true at a certain degree, I want to stress the fact that the brevity of Kayatz’s form-critical treatment of the instructions of Prov 1–9 does not take away from the important results she offers. As subsequent studies show, Kayatz, as opposed to the rigid genre definitions of Whybray, offered a more informed study of the instruction genre in Prov 1–9 on which more recent studies of the same topic can build more easily than on the results of Whybray’s form-critical examination. Kayatz’s aim was not only to point out the affinities between Israelite and Egyptian instructions but the variations as well. These differences of course stem from the simple fact that these two

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 63–4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>37</sup> C. Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1–9: Eine Form- und Motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter Einbeziehung Ägyptischen Vergleichsmaterials* (WMANT 22; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1966). Cf. Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 18A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 335–6; Steiert, *Fremdkörper*, 260, 264–9; Camp, *Wisdom*, 29–34.

<sup>38</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 64.

peoples diverge from each other in terms of culture and religion. The preamble Prov 1:1–6 (without 1:7) exhibited the greatest similarities with the preambles of some Egyptian instructions. As opposed to other views in this matter, Kayatz, in accordance with von Rad, underscored that the instructional material in Prov 1–9 is a relatively early composition, possibly a literary unit, emphasizing with him the importance of Solomon’s links with Egypt. Egyptian influence was also detected in Prov 8, especially 8:22–31, where the figure of Wisdom resembles that of the Egyptian Maat. However, this influence stemmed from another source. Wisdom’s speech in chapter 8 retains affinities with the self-glorifying “I” speeches of Egyptian gods, in form and content alike. Maat, however, utters no such speeches in the Egyptian texts. In terms of Wisdom’s first speech in 1:20–33, Kayatz established no Egyptian connections, concluding that this speech betrays the prepossession of the teaching of the Israelite prophets. Additional comparable aspects with the Egyptian instructions were the stress on “hearing” or obeying and teaching, and the importance of the “heart” as the focal point of the human will. There is also a parallel between Wisdom and Maat as the source of “life” and as governing the minds of the kings and officials. The most significant variation between Prov 1–9 and Egyptian literature is that the latter one does not encapsulate the concept of Wisdom itself. In spite of the fact that the Egyptian language does have a word, which may be translated as “wisdom,” this has no bearing on Egyptian instructions. Apart from the borrowed descriptive aspects in these sections of Prov 1–9, Maat was a goddess in a polytheistic pantheon and thus essentially different from the figure of personified Wisdom in Proverbs.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it is unlikely that it was the source of the creation of the latter character. The other aspect of divergence is that while Proverbs employs frequently the address form “My son,” this has no parallel in Egyptian instructions, although it is present in other Egyptian educational literature. The sporadic association of the mother with the father in these admonitions is also without parallel and thus it suggests a different *Sitz im Leben*, namely education in a family setting rather than in a school. Kayatz’s concludes that Prov 1–9 is firmly a constituent part of the Israelite tradition in spite of the Egyptian motifs. The detailed and precise comparison and contrast of Prov 1–9 with Egyptian texts has validated the view according to which these chapters pertain to particular literary genres of which the Egyptian instructions and other literature furnished the models, while being fairly lucid about the fact that they are far from being sheer imitations.<sup>40</sup> Whybray notes that in terms of the character of the teaching of chapters 1–9, Kayatz rejected the view that there is a great deal of variation between the discourses and the sentence literature of Proverbs, especially at the theological level.<sup>41</sup> I want to point out that some present day scholarship seem to underscore Kayatz’s assumptions, especially as far as the question of variations on a theological level is concerned.<sup>42</sup> Kayatz deemed that the figure of personified Wisdom stemmed from the character of God himself in the Israelite tradition.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 64–5.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 65–6.

<sup>41</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 66.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Philip Johannes Nel, *The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs* (BZAW 158; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), 97–101; Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 57–73; *Instruction*, 113–9; K. M. Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold Set in Silver: Proverbial Clusters in Proverbs 10:1 – 22:16* (BZAW 273; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 316; Katherine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 125–54.

<sup>43</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 66.

A radical differentiation between the instruction genre and sentence literature has been undertaken by McKane.<sup>44</sup> He claimed that the instruction genre reached Israel via Egypt in a period when under Solomon's rule there was a need for the formation of a civil service, which led to the organization of schools for the education of the officials. McKane followed the results proffered by Kayatz, but he also widened the treatment by processing the information furnished by Babylonian-Assyrian instructions and proverb collections some of which he examined extensively. Initially instruction evolved in a school setting but gradually its purposes were widened. Therefore, the instructions encountered in Proverbs are not instructions for officials designed to offer them training but were meant to serve as instruction about the right way of life for the wider community and the instruction of its young men. McKane also identified a number of instructions in Prov 1–9 but he diverges from Whybray in some details. The former scholar maintained that chapters 1–9 may not be an entirely unified collection and some of them may have undergone some expansion through the insertion of additional material. Part of this expansion is “diffuse” and “homiletical,” while some do not belong to the instruction genre. McKane also supported the idea of a theological development in which the instructions have fulfilled the purpose of implanting Yahwistic piety.

New hypotheses about chapters 1–9 and particularly the triumvirate of “didactic poems” (*Lehrgedichten*) has been mooted by B. Lang in a series of writings published between 1972 and 1986.<sup>45</sup> In terms of chapters 1–7, in which Wisdom is not the speaker but the human teacher, Lang viewed the ten didactic poems as a sequence of unrelated, however, similar teachers' lessons of different authorship that had been amalgamated without any specific plan or unity of style, although they retained resembling introductory sections in which the teacher pleaded for the attention of the student. These lessons were also comparable to Egyptian school texts, which were also devoid of a clear structure. Lang's opinion was that this type of literature was textually fluid, subject to alterations and expansions, but in opposition to Whybray he reckoned that it was not possible to reach a final conclusion as to where any of the original *Lehrrede* of Prov 1–7 would have ended. The determination of their *Sitz im Leben* also constituted a difficult problem.<sup>46</sup> Lang thought that the existence of schools in pre-exilic Israel can be supported with ample evidence.<sup>47</sup> As opposed to Egypt where generally the *Lehrrede* were designed to fulfil educational purposes, in Israel they were meant to benefit all those in the community who have shown readiness to gain intellectual rewards by the internalization of their teaching. Lang asserted that Prov 1–9 retains a particular Israelite character. In terms of the character of the three speeches of Wisdom (1:20–33; 8:1–36 and 9:1–6) Lang postulated that they differed from the *Lehrrede* of chapter 1–7 and were the upshots of scribal schools, as highlighted by their superb poetical quality. The scribal schools he was thinking about

<sup>44</sup> William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1980). Cf. Camp, *Wisdom*, 43–6; Crenshaw, “The Wisdom Literature,” 375.

<sup>45</sup> B. Lang, *Die weisheitliche Lehrrede: Eine Untersuchung von Sprüche 1–7* (SB 54; Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1972); *Anweisungen gegen die Torheit: Sprichwörter – Jesus Sirach* (SKKAT 19; Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1973); *Frau Weisheit: Deutung einer biblischen Gestalt* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1975). The English translation of the latter work is *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1986). For a further evaluation of Lang see further Steiert, *Fremdkörper*, 260, 263, 265.

<sup>46</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 66–7.

<sup>47</sup> B. Lang, “Schule und Unterricht im alten Israel,” in *La Sagesse De L'Ancien Testament: Nouvelle édition mise à jour* (ed. Maurice Gilbert ; BETL 51; Lueven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1990), 186–201.

were not necessarily linked to the court, the setting in which Wisdom is portrayed as giving her speech in 1:20–21; 8:1–3 and 9:3, also inferring that the city gate or the market square may have been the venue where these schools functioned. The quality that these didactic poems retain betrays the fact that the purview of their teaching was not merely utilitarian since they betray a great deal of preoccupation with broader matters such as the nature of Wisdom, her rule in the world and her relationship to God as the creator of the world.<sup>48</sup> Lang's monograph in 1986,<sup>49</sup> which was a revision of his earlier work (1975), broached a new theory in relation to the enigma surrounding the origin of the figure of Wisdom and specifically the nature of Prov 8. This chapter was initially composed as a poem of self-exaltment of an Israelite goddess but was concomitantly altered in order to conform to a more chiselled Yahwism.<sup>50</sup>

N. Habel provided the first major study of the path imagery in Prov 1–9.<sup>51</sup> He asserted that there is a "polar contrast" between two paths, that is the way of wisdom and the way of the wicked, which is central to a basic set of symbols in the work. The individuals are envisaged to make a choice between these two paths, out of which one leads to life, while the other escorts to death. The paths retain their own characteristics. The path of wisdom is straight and clear, open and candid as opposed to the path of the wicked, which is dark and perilous. The great deficiency of Habel's work is that he employed much of McKane's dichotomized view of a development from secular wisdom to a religious, Yahwistic type of wisdom.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, his contribution still remains valuable and innovative, especially in light of the established views of Proverbs scholarship in his day.

In 1975, P. Tribble published a study of the structure of Prov 1:20–33.<sup>53</sup> The exegetical method she employed was rhetorical criticism. Despite the criticism her treatment has received,<sup>54</sup> her study was one of the first such examinations of Wisdom's first speech having the clear intention of teasing out the existing poetic structures in that passage. At the time it was definitely an innovative examination since she treated the speech as a synchronic unit. She also detected a chiasmic structure in the poem stressing its homiletic, advisory, didactic and prophetic dimensions.<sup>55</sup>

J. Aletti produced two valuable studies both of which impacted scholarship a great deal. The first was concerned with questions of structure in 8:22–31,<sup>56</sup> while the second dealt with seduction and speech in Prov 1–9.<sup>57</sup> In his examination of the structure of 8:22–31, he employed structuralist methodology in order to cast light on the existence of a possible bipartite structure in the poem. He tackled three characters, namely God, Wisdom and humankind. In his bipartite structure Aletti also focused on

<sup>48</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 67.

<sup>49</sup> B. Lang, *Frau Weisheit: Deutung einer biblischen Gestalt* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1975). The English translation of the latter work is *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1986).

<sup>50</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 67; Steiert, *Fremdkörper*, 292–3.

<sup>51</sup> N. Habel, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9," *Int* 26 (1972): 131–56. Cf. Crenshaw, "The Wisdom Literature," 377.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Weeks, *Instruction*, 74–5.

<sup>53</sup> P. Tribble, "Wisdom Builds a Poem. The Architecture of Proverbs 1:20–33," *JBL* 94 (1975): 509–18.

<sup>54</sup> Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 104.

<sup>55</sup> Tribble, "Wisdom," 518.

<sup>56</sup> J. Aletti, "Proverbes 8,22–31. Étude de structure," *Bib* 57 (1976): 25–37.

<sup>57</sup> J. N. Aletti, "Séduction et parole en Proverbes I–IX," *V/T* 27 (1977): 129–44.

the mediative function of Wisdom, seen by him as Wisdom's progression from passivity to presence and eventually activity. In his second study Aletti observed that each character, namely Wisdom and her counterparts, that is, the Strange Woman and Folly, all attempt to "seduce" their audience to follow their paths. Aletti made the relevant contribution to this understanding of Prov 1–9 by pairing up the speeches of Wisdom with the speeches by other characters.

As a development of Aletti's first study of the structure of 8:22–31, Gale A. Yee offered a tripartite structure for the three characters about which Aletti talked, namely God, Wisdom and humankind.<sup>58</sup> Yee's tripartite structure, as opposed to Aletti's bipartite structure, accounts better for the syntagmatic and semantic affiliations among the characters God, Wisdom and humankind. Moreover, this tripartite structure also signals Wisdom's pre-existence, her role during God's creative activity to guarantee the safety of the world for humankind, and her interaction with humanity.<sup>59</sup>

M. Gilbert published three valuable studies pertaining to the three speeches of Wisdom, chapters 8 (1979),<sup>60</sup> 9:1–6 (1980),<sup>61</sup> and 1:20–33 (1991).<sup>62</sup> Gilbert's treatments offer extensive information about the structure and coherence of these speeches and the different interpretations that have been suggested for various terms and expressions and for further textual problems. Whybray deems that Gilbert made no "startlingly" new proposals but he took issue with Lang in relation to the question of *Sitz im Leben*. Gilbert reckoned that there is no significant evidence for the existence of the market-place school. He explicates that Wisdom speaks in public to the casual listener who passes by. In terms of 1:20–33 he purported a family as opposed to a school background and accepted with certain reservations Robert's ideas about the prophetic influence, while maintaining that the language of the speech should still be viewed as "typically sapiential."<sup>63</sup>

P. J. Nel's study on the structure and ethos of the wisdom admonitions in Proverbs fills a hiatus in this area of the study of the book.<sup>64</sup> He provides innovative discussions of the various wisdom genres, such as parable, fable, riddle, wisdom teaching, hymn etc. focusing on their formal structure. Then he elucidates the occurrence of wisdom admonition-motivation in various clauses. Wisdom's first speech for instance (1:20–33) is regarded as a "complex structure." In terms of the ethos of wisdom he examines such questions as the role and function of the motivation, the authority encountered in the wisdom motivations and amongst others a very plausible treatment of the concept of the fear of the Lord. In this latter examination he questions the long-held view according to which early Israelite wisdom was purely secular in its nature.<sup>65</sup>

In 1984 O. Plöger's seminal commentary was published, which appraised very positively the role of chapters 1–9 as a prologue for the whole book of Proverbs. He

<sup>58</sup> Gale A. Yee, "An Analysis of Prov 8 22–31 According to Style and Structure," *ZAW* 94 (1982): 58–66.

<sup>59</sup> Yee, "Prov 8 22–31," 60–1.

<sup>60</sup> Maurice Gilbert, "Le discours de la Sagesse en Proverbes, 8," in *La Sagesse De L'Ancien Testament: Nouvelle édition mise à jour* (ed. Maurice Gilbert ; BETL 51; Lueven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1990), 202–18.

<sup>61</sup> M. Gilbert, "Proverbes 9, 1–6," *CaE* 32 (1980): 23–5.

<sup>62</sup> M. Gilbert, "Le discours menaçant de Sagesse en Proverbes 1,20–33," in *Storia e tradizione di Israele: Festschrift J. A. Soggin* (eds. D. Garonne and F. Israel; Brescia: Paideia, 1991), 99–119.

<sup>63</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 68.

<sup>64</sup> Nel, *Structure*.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 97–101.

also made a good case by pointing out the formal and thematic aspects of these chapters<sup>66</sup> and by postulating a single editor for the book.<sup>67</sup>

M. Saebo purports that Prov 1–9 is the “best specimen of a cyclic composition technique” in the book of Proverbs as a whole.<sup>68</sup> Apparently, there are two main blocks of tradition, which are different in terms of their content. First, there is in Prov 2–4 an admonitory wisdom teaching, which alludes mainly to the personal acquiring of wisdom and its pleasurable rewards as the greatest benefit for men. Second, Prov 5–7, constitutes a section of ethical counsels. Around this “double kernel” of practical teaching one encounters the unparalleled speeches of Wisdom in 1:20–33 and 8:1–36. The very final “framing ‘ring’” commences with the prologue in Prov 1:2–7, and an introductory admonition in 1:8–19, concluding with the contrasting allegory of Wisdom and Folly in Prov 9. Saebo states that Prov 1–9 gives the “...impression of being an intentionally formed cyclic composition.”<sup>69</sup> Moreover, through this “framing composition technique,” the redaction of the greater part of Proverbs, that is Prov 1–24, has been achieved. Saebo states: “And this main part has, by the same method, been granted a higher degree of coherence than is usually assumed.”<sup>70</sup> Therefore, by treating Prov 1–9 together with 10–24, Saebo recalls a plausible point made earlier by Kitchen, however on different grounds, that Prov 1–24 forms “one proper literary unit.”<sup>71</sup> Saebo further claimed that it is feasible to purport, on the basis of the variations in the formation procedure, that, in terms of the process of tradition and redaction in the book of Proverbs, one may distinguish between chapters 1–24 and chapters 25–31. The former chapters (1–24) are characterized by a framing procedure and cyclic composition performed at various stages, whereas the latter chapters (25–31) have an additive way of formation. This complex history of tradition and redaction, which contributed to the final shape of this book, to a large degree was a history of “creative reinterpretation,” mostly for theological reasons. A similar cyclic composition technique in form is to be encountered in the form of the Talmud and in rabbinic Bibles.<sup>72</sup>

R. E. Murphy in his study of 1:20–33<sup>73</sup> offers some further elucidations of this passage, focusing on nuances that were generally overlooked up until then. He attempted to answer three questions: 1. The understanding of תשובנו לתוכחתיה in 1:23a, 2. The interpretation of ריחיה and ברי ך in 1:23bc, and 3. Is there a lapse of time between 1:23–24?

<sup>66</sup> Plöger, *Sprüche*, 3–7.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Crenshaw, “The Wisdom Literature,” 375.

<sup>68</sup> M. Saebo, “From Collections to Book – A New Approach to the History of Tradition and Redaction of the Book of Proverbs,” in *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of Jewish Studies* (Division A: The Period of the Bible, 1985), 99–106. This study was also published in *On the Way to Canon: Creative Tradition History in the Old Testament* (ed. Magne Saebo; JSOTSup 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 250–8. For a further explication of the traditio-historical reworking of Prov 1–9 see Doll, Peter, *Menschenschöpfung und Welterschöpfung in der alttestamentlichen Weisheit* (SBS 117; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH Stuttgart, 1985), 41–58.

<sup>69</sup> Saebo, “From Collections to Book,” 257.

<sup>70</sup> Saebo, “From Collections to Book,” 257.

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, “Proverbs and Wisdom Books of the Ancient Near East: The Factual History of a Literary Form,” *TB* 28 (1977): 75.

<sup>72</sup> Saebo, “From Collections to Book,” 258.

<sup>73</sup> R. E. Murphy, “Wisdom’s Song: Proverbs 1:20–33,” *CBQ* 48 (1986): 456–60.

F. Renfroe, in his colometric analysis<sup>74</sup> of the prologue to Prov 1–9, namely 1:1–6, concluded that, through the analysis he proposed, one is able to segregate the original text from secondary additions on formal and structural grounds. Wisdom literature generally reflects the ethos of the culture in which it came into being. So the question posed is whether the material isolated colometrically as secondary betrays any variations in terms of ethical viewpoints? Renfroe proffered an affirmative answer to the question posed.

F.-J. Steiert, in his work published in 1990,<sup>75</sup> focused on the evergreen question whether the wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible is to be regarded as an “alien corpus” (*Fremdkörper*), that is, as an example of the international wisdom tradition unrelated to Israel’s own religious traditions. Steiert homed in on the book of Proverbs, dedicating a third of his treatment to chapters 1–9. He also recognized the existing similarities between Prov 1–9 and the Egyptian instructions and additional Egyptian literature. However, he insisted that these affinities are overridden “overwhelmingly” by fairly significant variations. He took issue with Kayatz’s view, according to which the figure of Wisdom in Prov 8 retains aspects of the Egyptian Maat and he underscored the fact that in the relatively late Egyptian instructions such as Ani and Amenemope, Maat does not appear as a figurehead, as in the earlier instructions. These late Egyptian instructions champion a new type of personal piety towards the gods. The religious tone of the Egyptian and Hebrew texts is also fairly different, par excellence the former are polytheistic and deeply concerned with magical and cultic practices, which are alien to Proverbs. Steiert stressed the importance of the father or teacher in Prov 1–7, where the authority of the teacher is said to be almost equivalent with that of God and the purpose is to imprint the concept of the fear of the Lord in the mind of the pupil, which aspects are absent from the Egyptian instructions. Moreover he refuted Whybray’s and McKane’s etc. views according to which the allusions to Yahweh are expansions in the initial teaching, and he rather viewed the passages where these putative additions occur as a literary unity. In agreement with Robert, Steiert also emphasized that Prov 1–9 is contingent on such Israelite traditions as Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Nevertheless, he cautioned in terms of the outright acceptance of Robert’s overstated views of direct textual dependence. He further asserted that the purposes of the authors of Prov 1–9 fundamentally vary from the aims of the Egyptian instructions. The latter propagated conformity to a universal norm or Order prevalent in the created world, the former promoted the founding of a relationship between the pupil and God as creator through the embracement of Wisdom (Prov 4:8).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> F. Renfroe, “The Effect of Redaction on the Structure of Prov 1,1–6,” *ZAW* 101 (1989): 290–3. O. Loretz, in several studies and a monograph, has described a system of poetic analysis which attempts to apply what is known about Syro-Canaanite poetry from its manifestation in the Ugaritic texts to that which is to be encountered in the Hebrew Bible. Renfroe explicates: “...Loretz insists that confining ourselves to the incontrovertible data in a given text, namely the length of each line of poetry as determined by the number of consonants it contains, we may ascertain a great deal about the structure and history of the text without having to pre-suppose anything about the metric principles by which it was composed.” Cf. O. Loretz, *Kolometrie ugaritischer und hebräischer Poesie: Grundlagen, informationstheoretische und literaturwissenschaftliche Aspekte*, *ZAW* 98 (1986): 249–66; O. Loretz – I. Kottsieper, *Colometry in Ugaritic and Biblical Poetry: Introduction, Illustrations and a Topical Bibliography* (F. Renfroe, trans.), *Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur* 5, 1987.

<sup>75</sup> Steiert, *Fremdkörper*.

<sup>76</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 68–9.

R. C. Van Leeuwen offered a prominent treatment of the liminality and worldview in Prov 1–9.<sup>77</sup> He argues that the “root metaphors” or “nuclear symbols” of chapters 1–9 are not to be restricted to notions of “way” (Habel) or of “Woman Wisdom” (Camp). Instead one should see a wider metaphoric system and polarity of Wisdom/Folly, Good/Pseudo-Good, Life/Death alongside the underlying notion of “limits” and “boundaries” “created” and “carved” by God as part of the order of the created world. God established the limits of the sea, so in similar fashion God has set the limits within which wisdom is to be found, namely between good and life. Chapters 1–9 encapsulate enticements in order to violate the divinely ordained limits. These seductions occur as negative prolepsis placed in the mouth of the pseudo-good. The guarding of the boundaries is important to justice. Moreover exceeding them is the “consummate folly,” which steers to death.<sup>78</sup> Van Leeuwen’s commentary on Proverbs has been published in the *New Interpreter’s Bible* series.<sup>79</sup> In this commentary, alongside other matters, he successfully expanded his valuable insights about the theology and worldview of not only chapters 1–9 but of the rest of the book of Proverbs, building on his earlier works.<sup>80</sup> In two further articles he made a good case by postulating that the ancient near-eastern pattern of wise “house-building,” “house-filling/provisioning” and certain other cultural activities were construed both by Mesopotamians and Israelites as stemming from the divine wisdom of creation.<sup>81</sup> The fact that creation is comprehended as a macrocosmic house is shown in several Hebrew Bible texts. It will become evident that Proverbs in this particular matter plays a very important role, especially in terms of chapters 8; 3:19–20 etc. Van Leeuwen’s treatment is concerned only with explicit house-building and filling, in terms of temples, ordinary houses and creation as a macrocosmic house. All these assumptions concerning the connections between “wisdom” and/or “skill” presuppose a rejection of the long-held dichotomized view of theoretical and practical wisdom established by Whybray and other scholars.

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<sup>77</sup> Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Liminality and Worldview in Proverbs 1–9,” *Semeia* 50 (1990): 111–44. A definition of liminality may be the following: “Liminality (from the Latin word *limen*, meaning ‘a threshold’) is a psychological, neurological, or metaphysical subjective, conscious state of being on the ‘threshold’ of or between two different existential planes, as defined in neurological psychology (a ‘liminal state’) and in the anthropological theories of ritual by such writers as Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, and others. In the anthropological theories, a ritual, especially a rite of passage, involves some change to the participants, especially their social status. The liminal state is characterized by ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy. One’s sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation. Liminality is a period of transition where normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behaviour are relaxed – a situation which can lead to new perspectives. People, places, or things may not complete a transition, or a transition between two states may not be fully possible. Those who remain in a state between two other states may become permanently liminal”; see further: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liminality>.

<sup>78</sup> Van Leeuwen, “Liminality and Worldview,” 111.

<sup>79</sup> Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs* in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, V. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1997),

<sup>80</sup> Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Proverbs 30:21–23 and the Biblical World Upside Down,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 599–610.

<sup>81</sup> Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Building God’s House: An Exploration in Wisdom,” in *The Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of Bruce K. Waltke* (eds., J. I. Packer and Sven K. Soderlund; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 204–11; “Cosmos, Temple, House: Building and Wisdom in Mesopotamia and Israel,” in *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel* (ed. Richard J. Clifford; SBLSS 36; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 67–90.

A. Meinhold's two-volume commentary on Proverbs, published in 1991,<sup>82</sup> was a very significant one, the repercussions of which can still be felt. Meinhold employs redaction criticism to support his suggestion that chapters 1–9 and 31 “build” a framework round the whole book. His reasoning, on occasions rightly or wrongly criticized,<sup>83</sup> provided further points of departure towards a more synchronic view of chapters 1–9.

Whybray in his work published in 1994<sup>84</sup> had taken up again the questions of structure and character of chapters 1–9. Largely conformed he conformed to his previous statements<sup>85</sup> but supplemented these with further “refinements” and “precisions,” dropping the idea of a “direct” dependence of these instructions on Egyptian counterparts. He also supplanted the term ten “discourses” with ten “instructions” and he regarded 1:8–19 and 4:20–27 as two prime examples of what had remained in their original form with no concomitant expansions. The ten initial instructions were composed for practical teaching, purporting a family as opposed to a school setting (contra Lang) thus pertaining to a once more widely known genre.<sup>86</sup> On the basis of J.-N. Aletti's<sup>87</sup> results he claimed that these instructions have one common purpose namely to alert students not to give in to various seductions, mainly connected to illicit women and savage thieves. In terms of the dating of the material he doubted whether the proposals for either a pre-exilic (Kayatz, Lang) or for a post-exilic one (Plöger; A. Meinhold) were in any way decisive. Whybray's solution to this crux was that possible expansions were added to the original material over a long period of time. Various aspects of the chapters, such as the lack of any allusion to the poor in opposition to the sentence literature (Prov 10:1ff) may signal the fact that the pupils addressed in these instructions stemmed from the upper echelons of the society, representing an affluent privileged strata.<sup>88</sup> Whybray eventually succumbs to certain changes in the scholarly world pertaining to genre definition by saying in this work that although the instructions pertain to a common genre, they do not conform to a “rigid” pattern.<sup>89</sup> He also reckoned that their reiterating character betrays that they are a selection of initially isolated pieces by various writers. An additional indication of this fact was that the wisdom-additions and Yahweh-additions had not been adjoined systematically. No such additions were added to certain instructions, whilst others were expanded with either Yahweh-additions or wisdom-additions or alike. Contrary to early opinions, Whybray deemed that the Yahweh-additions have been interpolated not for the purpose of altering the “secular” character of the texts

<sup>82</sup> Arndt Meinhold, *Die Sprüche: Teil 1: Sprüche Kapitel 1–15* (ZBK 16.1; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1991); *Die Sprüche: Teil 2: Sprüche Kapitel 16–31* (ZBK 16.2; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1991).

<sup>83</sup> Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 322–3; Weeks, *Instruction*, 46–7, 46, n. 24.

<sup>84</sup> R. N. Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (JSOTSup 168; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

<sup>85</sup> Whybray, *Wisdom*.

<sup>86</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 69.

<sup>87</sup> Aletti, “Séduction.”

<sup>88</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 69. In this matter see further his additional treatment Roger Norman Whybray, “City Life in Proverbs 1–9,” in „*Jenes Ding hat seine Zeit...*“ *Studien zur israelitischen und altorientalischen Weisheit: Diethelm Michel zum 65. Geburtstag* (eds. Anja A. Diesel, Reinhard G. Lehmann, Eckart Otto and Andreas Wagner; BZAW 241; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 243–50.

<sup>89</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 69. However, reading Whybray's treatments in his work *Composition*, I wondered whether he really managed to offer a more “flexible” genre descriptions of the instructions.

into “religious” but as a “salutary warning” that God is the sovereign of all human activities. Whybray detected no logical sequence in terms of the organization in these chapters. He went only as far as to suggest that the terminating three instructions in chapters 5, 6 and 7 could have been positioned in their current topos in order to stress the specific “urgency” of the exhortations against partnering with immoral women, to whom Wisdom as a “bride” was meant to be a “counter-attraction.”<sup>90</sup> Building on the works of earlier scholars such as Camp,<sup>91</sup> T. P. McCreesh<sup>92</sup> and Meinhold,<sup>93</sup> he accepted the view that Prov 1–9 and 31:10–31, chapters preoccupied with opposing female figures, are the result of a deliberate editorial planning in order to build a framework to the entire book of Proverbs.<sup>94</sup> I think one cannot but marvel at the way in which Whybray altered some of his earlier views in relation to chapters 1–9. However, his final treatment published in 1994 still lacks a great deal of awareness in terms of more recent genre studies and the formal characteristics of instruction. The literary and thematic points of view, to which he sometimes appealed, are hardly reflections of such awareness in the treatment of the various passages.<sup>95</sup>

Weeks’s *Early Israelite Wisdom* (1994)<sup>96</sup> gathers together the valuable treatment of a series of topics such as whether early wisdom was secular or not, wisdom and the reign of Solomon, schools in Israel etc. I think that as much as he succeeds in offering a balanced and informed treatment of much of the topics tackled, he seems to make too much of his arguments against the existence of schools in pre-exilic Israel. Therefore, he is not that conclusive in this final matter as he thought he will be. K. A. Kitchen, in a very balanced and convincing study criticizes Weeks’s work. Weeks is mistaken in his interpretation of essential aspects of the instructional wisdom of Israel and of the adjacent nations. Kitchen argues that there is no reason to doubt the soundness of the titles of the four sections of the book of Proverbs. Weeks also seems to be devoid of the necessary acquaintance with the degree and distribution of parallelism in non-biblical instructional texts of the ancient Near East, which resulted in his faulty dating of the biblical material. Kitchen reckons that the employment of bicolia in Proverbs does not corroborate a date later than the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. since by that period that literary feature was in decline.<sup>97</sup>

Scott L. Harris,<sup>98</sup> in his study of inner-biblical interpretation of Prov 1–9, has connected parts of these chapters with Jeremiah and with the Joseph story, viewing in these connections a refashioning and interpretation of older material. Weeks, who attempted to deny the existence of any wisdom influence in the Joseph story,<sup>99</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 69–70.

<sup>91</sup> Camp, *Wisdom*.

<sup>92</sup> T. P. McCreesh, “Wisdom as Wife: Proverbs 31:10–31,” *RB* 92 (1985): 25–46.

<sup>93</sup> Meinhold, *Sprüche*.

<sup>94</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 70.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Whybray, *Composition*, 40.

<sup>96</sup> Weeks, *Wisdom*.

<sup>97</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, “Biblical Instructional Wisdom: the Decisive Voice of the Ancient Near East,” in *Boundaries of the Ancient-near-eastern World* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). For another authoritative treatment on the subject by Kitchen see further by the same author “Some Egyptian Background to the Old Testament,” *TB* 5/6 (1960): 4–18; “Proverbs and Wisdom Books of the Ancient Near East,” 69–114.

<sup>98</sup> Scott L. Harris, *Proverbs 1–9: A Study of Inner-Biblical Interpretation* (SBLDS 150; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995).

<sup>99</sup> Weeks, *Wisdom*, 92–109.

disagreed with the links detected by Harris between parts of Prov 1–9 and the Joseph story.

Murphy published his commentary on Proverbs in 1998.<sup>100</sup> Proverbs 1–9 is approached as a “collection of collections” being introduced by a preface. By this he accorded with the “unproven but likely assumption” that during the post-exilic era chapters 1–9 “set the tone” for the predominantly pre-exilic collections in chapters 10–31.

R. Schäfer’s commentary offered substantial insights about the diachronic structures at work in Prov 1–9.<sup>101</sup> This work is exceptional in making questions of structure the main scope of the treatment. Schäfer identified twelve, initially separate, what he terms *Lebrgedichte*, together with an introduction. This collection was originally independent and has undergone theological reinterpretation, mainly through the addition of secondary material.<sup>102</sup> I think the great deficiency of Schäfer’s study is that he based a large part of his theological conclusions on the dichotomized view of secular and religious wisdom (no wonder, when the main English commentary he employed is that of McKane, which in this matter is conclusive in promoting this dichotomy), which makes his arguments fairly uninformed in terms of changes in scholarship but more importantly limited in their theological outlook.

The year 1999 marked the publishing of another important commentary on Proverbs, written by Richard J. Clifford in the *Old Testament Library* series.<sup>103</sup> Clifford points out in the preface of his commentary that in his analysis he made extensive use of rhetoric in order to tease out as to how have the instructions and maxims engaged the audience. The material that one encounters in Proverbs gained “fresh meaning” through the new juxtapositions. Par excellence in chapters 1–9 the instructions are juxtaposed to the speeches of personified Wisdom, thus making them available for a wider audience. As soon as the metaphorical level is accomplished in chapters 1–9, the proverbial sayings and the poems in the ensuing chapters obtain “depth and breadth.”<sup>104</sup>

A. Müller’s treatment of Prov 1–9,<sup>105</sup> which justly or unjustly has been labelled as “unapologetically old-fashioned” in its approach,<sup>106</sup> yielded original results. His theory is that Prov 1–9 centres on a kernel made up of an introduction in 4:10–27 and 5:21–22. In this introduction, an antagonism is established between the righteous and the sinner, with what remained of the teaching itself now in 6:1–19. This was subject to a “formative redaction” in order to create what is basically the current work, with some further expansions. Weeks makes the fair point that it would be “manifestly simpler” to elucidate the distinctiveness of 6:1–19 as an outcome of that being secondary, as opposed to being original, and the remainder secondary.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, I think Müller’s theory is not entirely undermined by any means by Weeks’s comments.

<sup>100</sup> Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs* (WBC 22; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998).

<sup>101</sup> Rolf Schäfer, *Die Poesie der Weisen: Dichotomie als Grundstruktur der Lebr- und Weisheitsgedichte in Proverbien 1–9* (WMANT 77; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999).

<sup>102</sup> Weeks, *Instruction*, 47.

<sup>103</sup> Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

<sup>104</sup> Clifford, *Proverbs*, 2. Cf. Weeks, *Instruction*, 46–7.

<sup>105</sup> Achim Müller, *Proverbien 1 – 9: Der Weisheit neue Kleider* (BZAW 291; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000).

<sup>106</sup> Weeks, *Instruction*, 45, n. 23.

<sup>107</sup> Weeks, *Instruction*, 45, n. 23.

A. Lelièvre and A. Maillot produced a succinct but well-informed commentary of Prov 1–9.<sup>108</sup> Some previous commentaries construed chapters 1–9 as a loose collection of sermons. The passages, which are usually construed expansions, are here treated as “audacious” and “unique” parts that actually may be viewed as one of the most beautiful poems of the Bible, especially chapters 1, 8 and 9.

The third commentary of Prov 1–9 in the year 2000 was that of Fox.<sup>109</sup> He asserted that chapters 1–9 were composed originally as a series of ten “lectures” with a prologue, with five “interludes” attached to them by various authors. The majority of the interludes, except 6:1–19, are preoccupied with the figure of Wisdom.<sup>110</sup>

David-Marc D’Hamonville and É. Dumouchet provide an excellent commentary of the LXX version of Prov 1–9 and further valuable treatments of various issues in Proverbs such as its place in the canon of the Hebrew Bible and of the LXX, a comparison of the collections as they are found in the Tg and LXX, poetic rhythm, sound patterns, images, themes, several theological aspects.<sup>111</sup> Its strength is in offering invaluable examinations of the omissions and additions of the LXX text of Prov 1–9, the language of the Greek translator.

L. Perdue argues for a post-exilic milieu in terms of the literary creation of Prov 1–9.<sup>112</sup> He talked about several school settings in the early half of the Persian period, namely temple schools, family guilds and civil academies. He also stressed the “remarkable literary skills” of the sages who produced chapters 1–9 and the fact that the poems about Wisdom form an *inclusio* around the ten instructions, which reconstitutes the elegance of didactic poetry, namely the themes and language inherent in the instructions.<sup>113</sup> Criticism has been targeted against Perdue’s conjectures about the post-exilic context he describes and the justification of his ideas about the literary positioning of the poems and instructions.<sup>114</sup> However, he is not mistaken in his latter assumptions, and just as previously Meinhold and Clifford had conjectured previously, he also assigns a great deal of creative activity to the redactors.

N. Shupak’s commentary of Proverbs,<sup>115</sup> published as part of the *Olam Hatanach* series, offers not only relevant comments on the text but essential introductions as to the background of the book and the various wisdom terminologies employed.

The first volume of Waltke’s two-volume commentary on Proverbs was published in 2004, whereas the second in 2005.<sup>116</sup> Waltke in his interpretation made significant use of the beneficial insights offered by new literary criticism. He presented a valuable introduction that focuses on such issues as questions of structure, forms of proverbs,

<sup>108</sup> André Lelièvre and Alphonse Maillot, *Commentaires Des Proverbes t. III chapitres 1–9* (LD 8 ; Paris: Les Éditions Du Cerf, 2000).

<sup>109</sup> Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Weeks, *Instruction*, 47.

<sup>111</sup> David-Marc D’Hamonville and Épiphané Dumouchet, *Les Proverbes* (La Bible D’Alexandrie 17; Paris: Les Éditions Du Cerf, 2000).

<sup>112</sup> Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (IBC; Louisville, 2000).

<sup>113</sup> Perdue, *Proverbs*, 62–3.

<sup>114</sup> Weeks, *Instruction*, 46–7.

<sup>115</sup> Nili Shupak, *The Book of Proverbs* (Heb.; Haifa, 2001/2002).

<sup>116</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004); *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15–31* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005).

theology, pedagogy, Christology etc. He also made valuable points in his arguments for a pre-exilic date of chapters 1–9.

J. E. Miles, in his semiotic treatment of Prov 1–9,<sup>117</sup> assigns God the role of the father, postulating that a satirical critique of Solomon is running through the work (i.e. Prov 1–9). Part of chapters 1–9 may be read in such a way but he provides no substantial reasons as to why one should do so.<sup>118</sup> In my opinion Miles's study also encapsulates some mistakes in the section entitled *Poetics*, in which he slightly misconstrues some previous scholarly opinions, as that of A. Berlin.<sup>119</sup>

Katherine J. Dell in her study<sup>120</sup> of the social context of the various collections of Proverbs casts light on the different material found in it, furnishing an overview of the characterization of its theology by scholars. She also tackles the question as to how individual proverbs, instructions and poems came together to build the current collection. She underscores the importance of the echoes of such Hebrew Bible genres as prophecy (especially Prov 1:20–33), law and cult, which can be encountered in Proverbs. In her discussion of the theological context she questions the view that Israelite wisdom was initially secular and non-religious. By doing this, she augments the number of scholars who cast doubt on this dichotomized view of secular and religious Wisdom in Proverbs, just as Nel, Weeks and K. Heim had done beforehand.<sup>121</sup>

S. Pinto accepts the general view that there are ten instructions in Prov 1–9, which are different from the remainder of the material. This study examines the literary form and the socio-linguistic significance of those instructions. Pinto, following the discussion of methodology, the scope and structure of the instructions, and an Italian translation of the text, proceeds to the rhetorical analysis of their structure.<sup>122</sup> It is also noted that the

<sup>117</sup> J. E. Miles, *Wise King – Royal Fool: Semiotics, Satire and Proverbs 1–9* (JSOTSup 399; London: T & T Clark International, 2004).

<sup>118</sup> Weeks, *Instruction*, 41, n. 18.

<sup>119</sup> A. Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 15. I think that Miles is mistaken when he states that: “Adele Berlin describes poetics as ‘the building-blocks of literature.’ Yet her explanation of poetics assumes the analogy that as linguistics is to language so poetics is to literature.” However, Berlin said the following: “The study of narrative, or narratology, is a subdivision of poetics. Poetics, the science of literature, is not an interpretative effort – it does not aim to elicit meaning from a text. Rather it aims to find the building blocks of literature and the rules by which they are assembled. In order to explain poetics as a discipline, a linguistic model is frequently offered: poetics is to literature as linguistics is to language.” As the above quotation shows Berlin does not ‘describe’ poetics as ‘the building-blocks of literature.’ Berlin talks about the ‘aims’ of poetics as being the finding of the building blocks of literature. Therefore, Berlin offers a clear explanation of what she meant. The description she gives of poetics is the following: “In order to explain poetics as a discipline, a linguistic model is frequently offered: poetics is to literature as linguistics is to language. That is, poetics describes the basic components of literature and the rules governing their use. Poetics strives to write a grammar, as it were, of literature. . . . Nevertheless, for the sake of breaking free from the structural-linguistic association, and in order to differentiate more clearly between poetics and literary criticism, or interpretation, I would propose a different analogy. If literature is likened to a cake, then poetics gives us the recipe and interpretation tells us how it tastes.” Moreover, Miles does not seem to have noticed the fact that Berlin primarily talked about poetics as far as narratives are concerned and not poetry, which the present writer supposes that Miles intended to talk about. Cf. Miles, *Wise King*, 16 n. 4.

<sup>120</sup> Dell, *Proverbs*.

<sup>121</sup> Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold*, 316. Heim writes: “. . . the often assumed ‘secular’ background of many sayings, including notions of theological ‘re-interpretation,’ should be finally be put to rest.”

<sup>122</sup> S. D. Weeks, review of Sebastiano Pinto, ‘Ascolta figlio’: autorità e antropologia dell’insegnamento in Proverbi 1–9. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31.5 (2007): 149. On a different note I want to point out

authority asserted by the instructions, initially with specific reference to the conventional role of the father, but also highlighting the father's language in the instructions echoes Deuteronomic terminology. He also attempts to connect chapters 1–9 with Torah materials. The weakness of the work is that it offers more data than synthesis.<sup>123</sup>

T. Longman III targets a wide audience in his commentary on wisdom books and psalms thus adding a Christian focus to the interpretation. This outlook also prepossesses his view on what "life" may mean in Proverbs, considering it in a fuller canonical context, which may thus retain the overtone of "afterlife." Longman stresses the theological contribution of Proverbs. He treats the concept of the fear of the Lord as a leitmotif throughout the book. Connections are made between wisdom and law and between covenant and covenant community. He also establishes a link between Wisdom and cultic life, which aspect is usually regarded as absent from the characterization of Wisdom in Prov 1–9 (with the exception of Prov 3:9–10).<sup>124</sup>

In 2007, Weeks produced his first explicit treatment of Prov 1–9.<sup>125</sup> In this study he offers a valuable introduction in terms of the instruction genre in the ancient Near East, although one wonders whether the data in this introduction is characterized or not by the same deficiencies that are mentioned by Kitchen in relation to Weeks's earlier treatment of literature in the ancient Near East. Leaving aside questions of dating, his results about the instruction genre are plausible in several points. He opts for a more flexible genre definition in terms of instruction, which allows subsequent studies to build on his work and thus vouch for the acceptance of Prov 1–9 as a whole pertaining to the instruction genre. He argues for viewing Prov 1–9 more holistically as a composition of instruction, making a good case by offering brief treatments of theme and imagery encountered in these chapters of Proverbs.

K. Seenam accepts the view that Proverbs may be divided into several collections (she talks about seven collections), and that ancient-near-eastern wisdom literature had an influence on this book. She also questions the long-held dichotomized view of Israelite secular and religious wisdom. Seenam also offers a detailed statistical study of specific parts of the vocabulary in the collections of Proverbs.<sup>126</sup>

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that rhetorical analysis and rhetorical criticism should not be confused. The distinction is clearly stated by Roland Meynet in his work entitled *Rhetorical Analysis: An Introduction to Biblical Rhetoric* (JSOTSup 256; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 37–8. The difference between the two stems from the fact that rhetorical criticism is characterized by the employment of the categories of classical rhetoric of the Graeco-Roman world. As opposed to this, rhetorical analysis attempts to establish specific organizational laws of biblical texts. Its aim is to "identify" the rhetoric which presided over the composition of biblical texts. Therefore, this rhetoric is thought to be distinct from the classical rhetoric of the Graeco-Roman world.

<sup>123</sup> S. D. Weeks, review of Sebastiano Pinto, 'Ascolta figlio': autorità e antropologia dell'insegnamento in Proverbi 1–9. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31.5 (2007): 149. The full data of the work is Sebastiano Pinto, 'Ascolta figlio': autorità e antropologia dell'insegnamento in Proverbi 1–9 (*StudBib* 4; Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 2006). Another review of the book is available online at: <http://www.itanakh.org/texts/tanakh/writings/proverbs/index.htm>.

<sup>124</sup> Katherine Dell, review of Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*. RBL 09/2007 (this review is available online at: <http://www.itanakh.org/texts/tanakh/writings/proverbs/index.htm>). The full data of Longman's work is Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs* (BCOTWP; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

<sup>125</sup> Weeks, *Instruction*.

<sup>126</sup> Jutta Krispenz, review of Kim Seenam, *The Coherence of the Collections of Proverbs*. RBL 05/2008 (this review is available online at: <http://www.itanakh.org/texts/tanakh/writings/proverbs/index.htm>). The full data of Seenam's work is: Kim Seenam, *The Coherence of the Collections of Proverbs* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2007).

## Summary and Appraisal

As can be seen, scholarship in the area of Proverbs has witnessed significant developments over the decades in the comprehension and interpretation of the material found in Prov 1–9. Scholarship, however, still varies in terms of certain aspects. Views evolved in terms of the recognition of a collection of possibly ten instructions in Prov 1–9 by a father or teacher to a son or pupil retaining similar formal aspects. However, scholars are still uncertain about the evaluation of the “lower limits” or the structural coherence of these instructions as a group. It is also accepted that these instructions have been expanded at certain stages but there is no *communis opinio* as to whether these additions were of a theological nature or not.<sup>127</sup> However, the increasing view is that the putative theological expansion was not of a “religious” nature in a way in which it has usually been understood in order to turn the “secular” material into “religious.” More and more scholars seem to offer criticisms of the long-held dichotomized view of secular and religious wisdom, which creates more room for more plausible theological treatments of the material. More recent scholarship betrays tendencies towards viewing Prov 1–9 more holistically as a composition of instructions without denying that the wisdom poems encountered in it may vary in certain aspects.

Another issue, which has undergone some progression, concerns the ancient-near-eastern influence, particularly the prepossession of the Egyptian instruction genre. There is a proclivity, however, to minimize the notion of direct influence in favour of one of parallel development within a common international tradition and to stress the degree of dependence on Israelite religious traditions.<sup>128</sup>

The dating of Prov 1–9 still remains, and I think it will remain, a question of intense debate over the coming years. There are not even comparative dates with regard to the instructions or the speeches of Wisdom, pre-exilic or post-exilic, or about the *Sitz im Leben*, either family or school. However, there is consensus about the fact that the instructions were intended to be accessible for a wider audience of readers than just young state officials under training.<sup>129</sup> The final aspect about which scholars cannot and I think that will not agree, which to some extent would be impossible, is the origin of the figure of Wisdom. Its particular Israelite character has been increasingly recognized not just in such studies as that of Lang but that of G. Baumann<sup>130</sup> and A. M. Sinnott.<sup>131</sup>

In my enumerations of commentaries and various articles, I have included the majority of those works on Prov 1–9 which attempted to focus on questions of literary artistry and poetics. Nevertheless, I think that the works on Hebrew poetry of such scholars as M. O’Connor,<sup>132</sup> J. L. Kugel,<sup>133</sup> R. Alter,<sup>134</sup> Berlin,<sup>135</sup> A. Schökel,<sup>136</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 70.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 70.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 70–1.

<sup>130</sup> Gerlinde Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1–9: Traditionsgeschichtliche und theologische Studien* (FAT 16; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996).

<sup>131</sup> Alice M. Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom* (SOTSMS; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

<sup>132</sup> M. O’Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997).

<sup>133</sup> James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>134</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (Basic Books: 1985).

and, more recently, that of N. P. Lunn<sup>137</sup> will continue to provide the impetus and inspiration for additional treatments of literary beauty and artistry in Prov 1–9.

## The Various Theories Regarding the Figure of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9

In the Hebrew Bible wisdom is usually regarded as an abstract quality, which may be attributed to either God or man. It is only in chapters 1–9 of Proverbs and in 24:7 that it is portrayed as a living person and of course this is also the case in such later Jewish literature as Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>138</sup> The literature about this question amounts to a legion if not more.<sup>139</sup> Most of the literature concerns the origin(s) of the personification, its relationship (if any) to mythological divine and semi-divine figures in the polytheistic systems of ancient religions, the explanations for its somewhat abrupt occurrence in Proverbs and its function there, how its relationship to God was construed and whether it is merely a literary creation or whether it was viewed by the authors of these chapters as a real person, as a “hypostasis.” There are certain “unquestioned facts” about this, which if not else just highlight the complexity of the issue.<sup>140</sup>

Important passages in the instructions of Prov 1–7 talk about wisdom in personal terms. This is not always the case, however, and wisdom is portrayed in an overwhelming variety of seemingly contradictory ways. In 1:2; 2:1–2, 10; 3:13; 4:4–5, the term “wisdom” is equated with additional abstract terms such as “knowledge,” “understanding,” etc. or with the very words of the teacher. In 2:4 and 3:14–15 (c.f. Job 28:15–19) it is talked about as an “infinitely” precious object, which humans endeavour to acquire. In these loci it is somewhat farfetched to think of wisdom as “personal.” In other loci it is portrayed in close proximity with God but apparently these passages also lack a specifically personal note. In 1:7; 2:5 and 9:10 wisdom is virtually the same with the concept of the fear of the Lord, whilst in 2:6 it is God’s gift to humans. Moreover in 3:19–20 one reads that “by wisdom,” equated with “understanding” just as in 2:2 and 8:1, God created the universe.<sup>141</sup>

Proverbs 1–7 makes use of expressions, which clearly talk about Wisdom in personal, feminine terms. In 3:16 wisdom holds long life, riches and honour in her two hands, which are accessible for all those who “find” her. In 4:6 the pupil receives the promise that if he fulfils Wisdom’s expectations culminating in loving her then she

<sup>135</sup> Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1992). An updated and revised edition of Berlin’s work has been recently published, which unfortunately was not at my availability in the process of the writing of the present article: *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (The Biblical Resource Series; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans and Dearborn, Mich., revised and expanded edition, 2008).

<sup>136</sup> Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (SubBi 11; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000).

<sup>137</sup> Nicholas P. Lunn, *Word-Order Variation in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: Differentiating Pragmatics and Poetics* (PBM; Bletchley: Paternoster, 2006).

<sup>138</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 71.

<sup>139</sup> I owe this expression to Müller. He employed it only in relation to Prov 8:22–31; see further Müller, *Proverbien 1 – 9*, 231.

<sup>140</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 71.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Whybray, *Survey*, 71.

will offer her protection and in 4:8–9 if he embraces Wisdom then she will exalt and honour him and place a graceful garland and a beautiful crown on his head.<sup>142</sup> In 7:4 Wisdom is possibly described as a bride and the pupil is beseeched to say to her, “You are my sister” (or “bride”). Certain additional loci in the instructions may also be interpreted in similar fashion. In 1:20–33 and 8:1–36, where she is clearly personal and female, Wisdom asserts the same qualities as the ones assigned to her in the other chapters.<sup>143</sup>

R. Reitzenstein<sup>144</sup> considered the origin of the figure of Wisdom to be rooted in Jewish-Hellenistic Isis-Sophia. This conjecture was grounded on the Egyptian goddess Isis with an “admixture” of an Iranian element.<sup>145</sup> Somewhat similarly, W. Bousset<sup>146</sup> and other scholars thought that post-exilic Judaism was significantly prepossessed by Iranian religious views, postulating that its origins stemmed from one or other of the Iranian angelic figures known as the Amesha Spentas. The prepossession of Babylonian personifications of abstract divine qualities has also been mooted.<sup>147</sup> W. Schenke,<sup>148</sup> whose work anticipated that of Kayatz, suggested that the Egyptian goddess Maat, a personification of “truth” and “righteousness,” may be the underlying model for the figure of Wisdom in Prov 1–9. There were still some scholars in this period who did not necessarily propose a foreign origin for the figure of personified Wisdom. Certain experts interpreted the figure of Wisdom, at least as the way in which it occurs in Prov 8, as another device offered as a post-exilic solution for the “ugly ditch” between an aloof transcendent deity and the realm of humankind. Schenke, following a presentation of the various views up to his time, surmised that the religion of pre-exilic Israel was highly polytheistic in its character thus the figure of Wisdom was initially a separate indigenous female deity who was worshipped alongside with Yahweh as one of his consorts. Apparently, such worship was still in practice in the post-exilic period eventually being imbibed into official Judaism and had become a personification of Yahweh’s wisdom. Nevertheless, Schenke deemed that this figure had been prepossessed by different non-Israelite mythological figures that cannot be recognized with any certainty. This hypothesis about the existence of a pre-exilic Israelite wisdom-goddess prepared such a work as that of Lang, mentioned above.<sup>149</sup>

The next major theory was a cultic one mooted by G. Boström.<sup>150</sup> Basically Wisdom is presented in contradistinction to the Strange Woman (אִשָּׁה זָרָה) or Foreign Woman (נִכְרִיָּה) in the instructions, against whom the pupil is warned, and again the pupil is exhorted against Woman Folly too (tWlysiK. tv,ae) in 9:13–18. This

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Whybray, *Survey*, 72. Whybray was mistaken in writing that a “garland or crown” because it is not a case of either/or but of both. Wisdom promises both a garland and a crown.

<sup>143</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 72.

<sup>144</sup> R. Reitzenstein, *Zwei religionsgeschichtliche Fragen nach ungedruckten griechischen Texten der Strassburger Bibliothek* (Strassburg: 1901); *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig: 1904); *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium* (Bonn: 1921).

<sup>145</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 5. Cf. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 336–8.

<sup>146</sup> W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*. The third edition edited by H. Gressmann in 1926 and reprinted in 1966 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1966).

<sup>147</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 5.

<sup>148</sup> W. Schenke, *Die Chokma (Sophia) in der jüdischen Hypostasen-Spekulation: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der religiösen Ideen im Zeitalter des Hellenismus* (Kristiana: Jacob Dybwad, 1913).

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Whybray, *Survey*, 5.

<sup>150</sup> G. Boström, *Proverbiastudien: Die Weisheit und die fremde Weib in Spr. 1–9* (LUÅ N.F. Avd. 1. Bd 30, Nr 3; Lund: Gleerup, 1935). Cf. Camp, *Wisdom*, 25–8; Crenshaw, “The Wisdom Literature,” 376.

Foreign Woman represented actual foreign married women whose purpose was to seduce Israelite young men to take part with them in a sexual cult entailing an act of adultery and a sacrificial meal alike, devoted to the goddess of love, Ishtar-Ashtarte. Ishtar-Ashtarte, was initially a Babylonian goddess but whose cult in different forms, such as that of the Queen of Heaven, embraced by some Judeans in the time of Jeremiah, was dissipated in other areas. In this cult the Foreign Woman in the instructions of chapters 1–9 of Proverbs portrayed the goddess whom she revered. Therefore, the clear aim of the figure of Wisdom was to offer a counterbalance or even a substitute for the goddess. In order that this aim may be properly accomplished, Wisdom had to be provided with some of the characteristics of Ishtar. The house of Wisdom mentioned in Prov 9:1 and its seven pillars erected by Wisdom was actually the universe with its seven planets, a reference to Ishtar, who was well-known as “Ishtar of the Stars,” or to the Queen of Heaven. In 9:1–6 Wisdom’s invitation to the youth to join her at the banquet table is the counterpart of Folly’s invitation in 9:13–18. Chapter 8 betrays similarities with the self-glorifying Ishtar hymns in Babylonian religious texts.<sup>151</sup>

Several keywords in chapter 8, in the rest of the speeches of Wisdom and in the instructions too, have undergone serious scrutiny. The abovementioned *Stichwort*, namely *אִשְׁתֵּי זָרָה / נְכַרְיָהָ* has enjoyed a great deal of attention, causing much controversy. An extensive treatment of both terms has been proffered by P. Humbert<sup>152</sup> in a detailed examination of the adjectives *זָר* and *נְכַרְיָהָ* in the Hebrew Bible. Despite the fact that both adjectives retain the meaning “foreign” in an ethnic sense, this is not the most prevalent meaning of *זָר*, and is by no means the absolute meaning of *נְכַרְיָהָ*. These two adjectives are frequently encountered to simply mean “other, another,” which meaning they may also have in these chapters. The term *אִשְׁתֵּי זָרָה / נְכַרְיָהָ* may signify “the wife of another man” and not a foreigner but an adulterous unchaste Israelite wife. These findings practically mean that the hypothesis mooted by Boström about a foreign sexual cult loses much of its supporting evidence. The teacher in Prov 1–9 is more likely to exhort his pupils against adultery, portraying Wisdom as a substitute. The unchaste woman thus represents the actual Israelite adulteress.<sup>153</sup> I think it would be wrong, however, to think that one is able to be exclusively precise in the definition of these terms and assert that the “foreign” ethnic quality was not at all in play in the construction of these characters in Prov 1–9. It may be much more plausible to say that the author employs the idea of “foreignness” of the woman primarily in a poetic way, utilizing the connotations of the term, without intending to pin down the presentation to an “exclusivist agenda.”<sup>154</sup> Whether the Strange Woman (Prov 2–7) and Folly (Prov 9) are in any way identical<sup>155</sup> or not<sup>156</sup> does not change the fact that Folly in 9:13–18 is personified in order to be a befitting contrast to Wisdom (9:1–6) and to the path of life propagated by the latter.

<sup>151</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 72–3.

<sup>152</sup> P. Humbert, “La ‘femme étrangère’ du livre des Proverbes,” *RES* (1937): 49–64; “Les adjectifs ‘Zār’ et ‘Nokrī’ et la ‘femme étrangère’ des proverbes bibliques,” in *Mélanges offerts à M. René Dussaud I* (1939), 259–66, reprinted in *Opusculs d’un Hébraïsant* (Neuchâtel: 1958), 111–18.

<sup>153</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 73.

<sup>154</sup> Weeks, *Instruction*, 141.

<sup>155</sup> Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 101; Waltke, *Proverbs*, 429.

<sup>156</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 73.

B. Gemser<sup>157</sup> in his commentary of Proverbs tallied with Humbert in his view against Boström about the identity of the אִשָּׁה זָרָה, i.e. she signifies a typical Israelite adulteress. In terms of the speeches of Wisdom, he concurred with the view that they have been prepossessed in some shape or form by mythological ideas without having a major effect on the characteristically Yahwistic ethical and religious tone.<sup>158</sup> Gemser also recognized prophetic overtones in 1:20–33. Wisdom is personified as a preacher with prophetic gifts. In 8:1–21 just as in the so-called “Wisdom-passages” in the discourses (chapters 1–7) Wisdom emerges as a public preacher who utters her general appeal to humankind, consolidating her speech through a presentation of her powers and her gifts. However, in 8:22–31, which retains the form of a creation hymn, she asserts to be a child and cherished companion of God, one who has passively taken part in the creation of the world. By doing this she shows her “patent of nobility,” i.e. her primordial origin and her proximity to God. He excluded any mythological connections whether Iranian, Babylonian, Egyptian etc.<sup>159</sup>

H. Ringgren expanded some of Gemser’s ideas in an extensive study of the hypostatization of divine qualities and functions in the ancient Near East.<sup>160</sup> His study encapsulates the Israelite-Jewish concepts of Wisdom as presented in Job, Proverbs and extra-biblical Jewish literature such as Sirach, the Wisdom of Solomon, later apocalypses and rabbinical literature. He made a good case by highlighting the methodological faultiness of reading back these later more overflowing evolvments into the much more controlled portrayals as that in Prov 1–9. Thus in 1:20–33 the personification of Wisdom might not be more than a literary device. In chapter 8, however, especially in 8:22–31, she is evidently not an abstraction or a literary personification but a “concrete being, self-existent beside God.”<sup>161</sup> Wisdom is a “hypostasis,” initially a divine quality, which appeared habitually in some near eastern religious systems, being eventually objectified as a separate august being. In spite of the near eastern analogy, Ringgren stressed that the Israelite-Jewish figure of Wisdom may not have stemmed in the first place from external mythological sources. The various theories about such deities as Ishtar or Isis who would have been prototypes furnish no valuable insights to the question since they are incapable of proffering valuable explanations as to how a “great goddess” has been turned into a “relatively unimportant” divine being with an abstract name.<sup>162</sup>

As I mentioned above several terms and expressions occurring in Prov 1–9 but especially in 8:22–31 have undergone serious scrutiny. The long-debated terms in 8:22–31 centred mainly round the relationship between Wisdom and God. The two most important terms are קִנְיָן in 8:22a and אֲמוֹן in 8:30a. As expected no *communis opinio* has been achieved as to the precise meaning of these terms. Without attempting to offer the whole array of interpretations offered, I enumerate and discuss briefly the most important ones.

<sup>157</sup> Berend Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos*, (HAT 16; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1963).

<sup>158</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 73.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 74.

<sup>160</sup> H. Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom: Studies in the Hypostatization of Divine Qualities and Functions in the Ancient Near East* (Uppsala: 1947).

<sup>161</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 74.

<sup>162</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 74.

Humbert's study<sup>163</sup> of the verb קָנָה in the Hebrew Bible proposed that there are two different unrelated verbs קָנָה in Hebrew. In most instances it simply means "to buy," whilst in other cases it refers to the acquisition or possession of an object (or slave) by other means than the payment of money. In only six loci, 8:22 being of one them, the verb could mean "to create." The evidence offered by Humbert was based on context and on allusions to the Ugaritic cognate *qny*, which he reckoned that it meant "to create," a function of Athirat as the creatress (*qnyṯ*) of the gods.<sup>164</sup>

This hypothesis has been embraced by various scholars, although not necessarily alongside with Humbert's theory of two separate verbs, by W. F. Albright,<sup>165</sup> who surmised the existence of a Canaanite goddess *Chokmot*, daughter of El, as the origin of the figure of Wisdom. Humbert's view had also been accepted by von Rad,<sup>166</sup> W. H. Schmidt,<sup>167</sup> O. Plöger, L. Boström, and Meinhold.<sup>168</sup> J. De Savignac suggested the neutral meaning, "produced."<sup>169</sup> On the basis of the Ugaritic evidence certain scholars, such as W. A. Irwin<sup>170</sup> and Gilbert,<sup>171</sup> arrived at a different conclusion. They mooted the sexual connotation "to beget, to father (a child)" for the term in question, stressing the fact that here it is not intended literally, as with male deities in the surrounding cultures, but figuratively. Lang, however, asserted that in the original version of the poem, Wisdom had been a goddess "literally" begotten by the male deity El.<sup>172</sup>

The other term, which caused no little controversy is אֲמֹנִים in 8:30a. This term appears only here in 8:30a and Jer 52:15, where it seems to signify artisans as a class and it is probably connected to the similar Akkadian cognate. Certain scholars question whether the term retains this meaning here in 8:30a. In the case of which the meaning "artisan" or "craftsman" would be accepted, then that would mean that Wisdom was actively involved in the creation of the universe. This interpretation is an "ancient" one in that it is buttressed by the LXX, which renders the term as ἀρμόζουσα, which may mean "one who organizes" and in Wis 7:22 (7:21 in some versions), Wisdom is called artificer (τεχνίτης) of all things. Those who vouched for this meaning were Delitzsch,<sup>173</sup> Oesterley,<sup>174</sup> Duesberg,<sup>175</sup> Barucq,<sup>176</sup> Lelièvre and Maillot,<sup>177</sup> de Savignac, Cazelles,<sup>178</sup> Ringgren,<sup>179</sup>

<sup>163</sup> P. Humbert, "Qānâ' en hébreu biblique," in *Festschrift für Alfred Bertholet* (ed. W. Baumgartner et al.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1950), 259-66, reprinted in *Opusculs d'un Hébraïsant* (Neuchâtel), 166-74.

<sup>164</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 75.

<sup>165</sup> W. F. Albright, "Some Canaanite-Phoenician Sources Of Hebrew Wisdom in Wisdom in Israel and In the Ancient Near East," *SVT* 3 (1955), 1-15. Cf. Fox, *Proverbs* 1-9, 334-5; Camp, *Wisdom*, 23-5.

<sup>166</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel* (1970).

<sup>167</sup> W. H. Schmidt, "קָנָה qnb erwerben," *THAT* Band II, 1976, cols. 650-9.

<sup>168</sup> Meinhold, *Sprüche*, 133, 144.

<sup>169</sup> Jean De Savignac, "Note Sur Le Sens Du Verset VIII 22 Des Proverbes," *VT* 4 (1954): 429-32; "La Sagesse en Proverbes VIII 22-31," *VT* 12 (1962): 211-5; "Interprétation de Proverbes VIII 22-32," *SVT* 17 (1969): 196-203.

<sup>170</sup> W. A. Irwin, "Where Shall Wisdom be Found?" *JBL* 80 (1961): 133-42.

<sup>171</sup> Gilbert, "Proverbes, 8," 209-10.

<sup>172</sup> Lang, *Wisdom*, 77f.

<sup>173</sup> Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 190-1.

<sup>174</sup> Oesterley, *Proverbs*, 64-5.

<sup>175</sup> Duesberg, *Proverbes*, 579 (*maître d'œuvre/architecte*).

<sup>176</sup> Barucq, *Proverbes*, 94 (*maître d'œuvres*).

<sup>177</sup> Lelièvre and Maillot, *Proverbes, (une jeune artiste)*, 171, 180, 193-4.

Keel,<sup>180</sup> Müller,<sup>181</sup> Skehan,<sup>182</sup> Kidner,<sup>183</sup> Whybray,<sup>184</sup> Albright, McKane,<sup>185</sup> Van Leeuwen,<sup>186</sup> Perdue,<sup>187</sup> Clifford,<sup>188</sup> Murphy,<sup>189</sup> C. Z. Rogers<sup>190</sup> and Jonas C. Greenfield.<sup>191</sup>

A second interpretation of the term would necessitate a repointing of אָמֹן to אָמוֹן, a passive participle form. This alternative meaning may also be classified as “ancient” since it had been adopted by Aquila, who reads τῆθηουμένη, “foster-child, darling.” This form appears in Lam 3:5, where it means “brought up” (of a child). The active participle form אָמוֹן (Isa 49:23) is often employed in the Hebrew Bible with the meaning of “tutor” or “foster-father.”<sup>192</sup> This interpretation would infer that Wisdom portrays herself in Prov 8:30a as a little child at the time of the creation of the universe, which may seem to be corroborated by the succeeding term “playing” or “dancing” (מִשְׁחָקָהּ) before God. This purports a passive presence of Wisdom at the creation of the world. This was accepted by Toy,<sup>193</sup> Cohen,<sup>194</sup> Greenstone,<sup>195</sup> Gilbert,<sup>196</sup> Gemser,<sup>197</sup> Kayatz,<sup>198</sup> Von Rad,<sup>199</sup> H. P. Rüter,<sup>200</sup> Plöger,<sup>201</sup> Lang, Meinhold,<sup>202</sup> and Baumann.<sup>203</sup>

<sup>178</sup> Henri Cazelles, “*Aḥiqar, Ummân and Amun and Biblical Wisdom Texts*,” in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (ed. Ziony Zevit et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 45–55.

<sup>179</sup> Helmer Ringgren, *Sprüche* (ATD 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 39–40 (*Werkmeisterin*).

<sup>180</sup> Othmar Keel, *Die Weisheit Spielt vor Gott: Ein ikonographischer Beitrag zur Deutung des m saḥāqāt in Sprüche 8,30 f.* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1974), 14 (*Meister*).

<sup>181</sup> Müller, *Proverben 1 – 9*, 236–7, n. 2 (*Werkmeister*).

<sup>182</sup> Patrick W. Skehan, “The Seven Columns of Wisdom’s House in Proverbs 1–9,” in *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*, 14.

<sup>183</sup> Kidner, *Proverbs*, 80 (“craftsman”).

<sup>184</sup> Whybray, *Wisdom*, 102 (“craftsman”).

<sup>185</sup> McKane, *Proverbs*, 357.

<sup>186</sup> Van Leeuwen, “Cosmos,” 75, n. 42.

<sup>187</sup> Perdue, *Proverbs*, 145.

<sup>188</sup> Clifford, *Proverbs*, 100.

<sup>189</sup> Murphy, *Proverbs*, 47–8.

<sup>190</sup> C. Z. Rogers, III, “The Meaning and Significance of the Hebrew Word *!wma* in Proverbs 8,30,” *ZAW* 109 (1997): 208–21.

<sup>191</sup> Jonas C. Greenfield, “The Seven Pillars of Wisdom (Prov. 9:1) – A Mistranslation,” *JQR* 76 (1985): 13–20.

<sup>192</sup> Keel, *Weisheit*, 23–4.

<sup>193</sup> Toy, *Proverbs*, 177.

<sup>194</sup> Cohen, *Proverbs*, 50.

<sup>195</sup> Greenstone, *Proverbs*, 88.

<sup>196</sup> Gilbert, “Proverbes, 8,” 214 (*petit enfant*).

<sup>197</sup> Gemser, *Sprüche*, 44 (*Liebling*).

<sup>198</sup> Kayatz, *Studien*, 93, 96, n. 1 (*Liebling*).

<sup>199</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Woking: Xpress Reprints, 1997), 157.

<sup>200</sup> H. P. Rüter, “Amon – Pflegekind: Zur Auslegungsgeschichte von Prv 8:30a,” in *Übersetzung und Deutung: Festschrift A. R. Hulst* (ed. D. Barthelemy; Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1977), 154–63.

<sup>201</sup> Plöger, *Sprüche*, 86, 94–6 (*Pflegling*).

<sup>202</sup> Meinhold, *Sprüche*, 134, n. 31 (*Pflegekind*).

<sup>203</sup> Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 131–40 (*Schosskind*). Cf. Schäfer, *Poesie*, 204, 204–5, n. 845. Schäfer translates: “da war ich bei ihm auf dem Schoß (gehalten).” Cf. Kuhn suggests “Lehrling, Schülerin,” see further Gottfried Kuhn, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Salomonischen Spruchbuches* (BZWANT 16; Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1931), 16.

Three scholars embarked on the journey of different interpretations, performing their examination from an “arrestingly different angle.”<sup>204</sup> These three solutions of interpretation have something in common. They purport that the key to the right meaning of this term is not to be found in the question of Wisdom’s ancestry or participation in creation but rather in her relationship with and function in the inhabited world. These interpretations tally with each other in the fact that Wisdom is not a hypostasis in these chapters. The entire chapter but especially 8:30-31, is concerned with the theme of the inhabited world, in which world and its inhabitants Wisdom is “frolicking” (8:31a), humankind being her “delight” (8:31b). Thus the first such interpretation is that of Scott.<sup>205</sup> In his article published in 1960<sup>206</sup> he suggested that instead of אִמּוֹן one should opt for the active participle אִמֵּן, which has the aforementioned meaning of “foster-father” or “guardian.” His argumentation is that since God “made the world by wisdom” (3:19), Wisdom should be viewed in this passage as a personification of the principle of harmony or coherence in the world. Wisdom is the “living link” between God and humankind.

Von Rad construed Wisdom as being the world-order, the powerful influence that has an effect on the lives of humankind amending their demeanour. Thus Wisdom is not a hypostasis, but an attribute not of God but of the world.

Keel, who translated קָנִי as “made, created me,” stressed the presence of the Egyptian imagery in the text and employed its iconographical evidence. He stated that אִמּוֹן does mean “master workman” but its grammatical function had been wrongly interpreted since it is Yahweh and not Wisdom who is denoted as being the “master workman” or “architect” of the created world. Therefore, the “playing” (מְשַׁחֵקֵת) of Wisdom in 8:30c is not the play of a child but it alludes to the way in which Wisdom “entertained” God. The imagery is of course provided by the Egyptian practice according to which a woman or goddess entertained a king or a higher god in different ways such as by dancing, acrobatics or cracking jokes in order to swing him into a good and humorous disposition. On the basis of the iconographical evidence such activities were enacted by the goddess Hathor. Apparently though, the figure of Maat is more likely to have been the model for 8:30-31. In these latter verses Wisdom “entertains” God but also “entertains,” or “frolics” in humankind. Similarly to Von Rad, Keel reckoned that Wisdom is not a hypostasis but a personification, a quality of the world and not of God.<sup>207</sup>

Another major interpretation is that of Fox, who takes it as an adverbial complement (infinitive absolute) to the main verb and translates: “And I was near him, growing up.”<sup>208</sup> Waltke notes that Toy’s argument that the meaning “faithfully”/“continually” “is not allowable” may be viewed as arbitrary and Fox’s opposition that the productive stem of I אִמֵּן is Niph’al is hard to maintain. The Qal of I אִמֵּן is attested in אִמֵּן, initially “trustworthy,” its nominal forms are אִמֵּן, “trustworthiness,” אִמֵּנָה, “truth” and אִמֵּת, “trustworthiness.” Furthermore the Niphal infinitive absolute of I אִמֵּן is “unattested” and some lexemes appear unexpectedly in isolated forms in otherwise non-productive stems, such as רִבֵּר, Qal active participle of רִבֵּר, which root is otherwise always in the Piel. Waltke concludes that the Qal infinitive absolute is commonly employed with the

<sup>204</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 77.

<sup>205</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 77.

<sup>206</sup> R. B. Y. Scott, “Wisdom and Creation: The *’āmōn* of Proverbs viii:30a,” *VT* 10 (1960): 213-23.

<sup>207</sup> Whybray, *Survey*, 77-8.

<sup>208</sup> M. V. Fox, “AMON AGAIN,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 699-702 and Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 285-7.

Niphal stem, proposing that it may serve as its surrogate. His translation reads: “And I was beside him constantly; and I was delighting [before him] day after day, celebrating before him at all times.”<sup>209</sup>

More recently Weeks offered an examination of the context and meaning of the term **אֲמֹן** in 8:30a.<sup>210</sup> He concludes that when the topos of the verse is comprehended in the way he propounds it in his examination then the term in question may be viewed as a well-attested noun or adjective. When employed in the plural, it alludes to those who are faithful to God and the expression may have been selected for usage in order to mirror such particular religious connotations.<sup>211</sup>

As it is evident the majority of scholars adopt the translation “artisan” and “work master,” as opposed to “nursling” or further translations mentioned above. However, I think that, in the coming years all the abovementioned assumptions regarding the connections between “wisdom” and/or “skill,” which presuppose a rejection of the long-held dichotomized view of theoretical and practical wisdom established by Whybray and other scholars, will contribute to further insights about the meaning of **אֲמֹן** as “artisan” or “master workman.”

## Further Studies Regarding the Origin of the Figure of Wisdom

Another important study in relation to the origin of the figure of Wisdom is that of Camp,<sup>212</sup> whose work on wisdom and the feminine in Proverbs is actually an examination of personified Wisdom. She argued that this personification is grounded on Israel’s experience of real women. Proverbs furnishes the vivid portrayal of woman as wife, mother, and educator of her children, manager and counsellor. Camp underscored the relevance of the theological fact that personified Wisdom is described in recognizably human terms. The tradition of “wise women” of the Hebrew Bible has an important influence. The illicit women, however, are devoid of realistic qualities and are merely stereotypes. She expanded this point in her second major work.<sup>213</sup> Camp also found analogies between aspects of personified Wisdom in Prov 1–9 and women portrayed elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. She also accepts the view that chapters 1–9 and 31 are placed editorially in order to form a framework to the book. In another article, she dilated her theory of personified Wisdom as a literary metaphor proffering a more detailed presentation of its importance for theology.<sup>214</sup>

The next major work dealing with an analysis of the “Foreign Woman” in Prov 1–9 is that of C. Maier.<sup>215</sup> Her treatment is an exegetical one twinned with a socio-

<sup>209</sup> Waltke, *Proverbs*, 391, 417–22.

<sup>210</sup> Stuart Weeks, “The Context and Meaning of Proverbs 8:30a,” *JBL* 125, no. 3 (2006): 433–42.

<sup>211</sup> Weeks, “Proverbs 8:30a,” 441.

<sup>212</sup> Camp, *Wisdom*. Cf. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 338–40; Whybray, *Survey*, 144–5.

<sup>213</sup> Claudia V. Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* (JSOTSup 320; Gender, Culture, Theory 9; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>214</sup> C. V. Camp, “Woman Wisdom as Root Metaphor: A Theological Consideration,” in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honour of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm.* (JSOTSup 58; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 45–76.

<sup>215</sup> Christl Maier, *Die «fremde Frau» in Proverbien 1–9: Eine exegetische und sozialgeschichtliche Studie* (OBO 144; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1995).

historical study. She makes further interesting points such as Prov 6:20–35 being a Midrashic interpretation of the Decalogue and Shema.<sup>216</sup>

B. Mack in his study published in 1985 suggested that the wisdom figure was a creation as an answer to a social breakdown, to a fissure between conventional forms of wisdom and the realities of social life. However, he does not offer a precise time as to when this social breakdown might have happened. I think Fox is right in assuming that it is difficult to think about a time in the biblical account, which would not have expressed certain complaints in relation to social or moral times of crisis. Mack's theory, however, aids in the understanding of the fact that the passages concerned with the personification or elsewhere in Prov 1–9, furnish no hints to a possible social discomfort. Even the illicit women do not seem to bring about such an effect. One causes his own destruction if he does not heed the instruction of Wisdom (5:9–10, 16). Therefore, it is fair to say that the passages concerned with the personification “. . . breathe an atmosphere of social and ideological security.”<sup>217</sup>

Another major work on the personification of Wisdom is that of Baumann. She asserts that the figure of personified Wisdom was created in order to satisfy the theological needs of the Persian period, which she labels a *Krisenzeit*, a “time of crisis.” The figure of Wisdom is a synthesis of various aspects of wisdom and it amalgamates human and divine wisdom.<sup>218</sup> On many occasions Wisdom is portrayed in terms employed elsewhere of Yahweh. The fact that her status is left ambiguous is a product of deliberate planning. The post-exilic era was a *Krisenzeit* and the “Deed-Consequence Nexus” of older wisdom was now subject to intense criticism. The theological questioning of Yahweh's world order in this time of injustice was answered by the creation of this figure. I concur with Fox that it may not be that simple to offer a “tidy and stereotyped periodization of history.”<sup>219</sup> Injustice was not in any way less on the agenda of the pre-exilic prophets etc. Nevertheless, Baumann offers valuable insights in terms of the relationship of this enigmatic figure and Yahweh on the basis of the examination of a whole array of internal references of the Hebrew Bible.

Finally, Alice M. Sinnott,<sup>220</sup> in her work pursues similar arguments to that of Mack and Baumann. She argues that through the figure of personified Wisdom the authors of Proverbs intended to offer an answer to the defeat by Babylon and the forfeiture of the Davidic monarchy. Through its intensive presence in subsequent Jewish literature, e.g. Sirach, Baruch, and Wisdom of Solomon etc. this figure also served as a response to the challenges of Hellenism and the inherent loss of Jewish identity. Sinnott's conclusion is that personified Wisdom was intended to “reinterpret” and “transform” the Israelite/Jewish tradition.

F. Mies furnished a valuable study in terms of the frequent misuse of the aspect of femininity of Wisdom in Prov 1–9.<sup>221</sup> She reckons that this misuse is frequently nothing more than grammatical necessity. According to Weeks she exaggerates slightly<sup>222</sup> but in

<sup>216</sup> Weeks, *Instruction*, 103–4, n. 8.

<sup>217</sup> Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 342.

<sup>218</sup> Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 267, 310–1.

<sup>219</sup> Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 344.

<sup>220</sup> Sinnott, *Personification*.

<sup>221</sup> F. Mies, “‘Dame Sagesse’ en Proverbes 9: une personification féminine ?” *RB* 108 (2001): 161–83.

<sup>222</sup> Weeks, *Instruction*, 71, n. 5.

ensemble her points are right, which should eventuate in a greater discretion in terms of the usage of this aspect in the imagery in question.

Christine Roy Yoder's theory is that the "Woman of Substance" in Prov 31:10–31 is "a composite picture of Persian-period women, particularly women of affluence or position."<sup>223</sup> She offers valuable evidence in terms of the socioeconomic context of not only 31:10–31 but also of chapters 1–9. Furthermore she strongly argues for a post-exilic date of Proc 1–9 and 31:10–31 but not by regurgitating the usual arguments but by providing fresh linguistic evidence, a presentation of the features of late Biblical Hebrew, foreign influence (Aramaisms and the absence of Grecisms) and orthography.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Christine Roy Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance, A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 1–9 and 31: 10–31* (BZAW 304; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 429.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Weeks, *Instruction*, 157, n. 3.