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OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM AND THE INTEGRATION DEBATE IN CHRISTIAN COUNSELING

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Integration of secular counseling theory and methods in the Christian community continues to be a controversial issue.¹ On one side of the debate are those who appeal to the sufficiency of Scripture, contending that modern psychology and psychotherapy are poisoned wells from which Christians cannot drink without compromising biblical truth.² They say no integration is possible. On the other side of the debate are integrationists, who argue that general revelation is a legitimate source of truth and who therefore attempt a cautious use of modern theory and methods regulated by biblical theology and a Christian worldview.³ No consensus among integrationists has emerged on the method of integration or the extent to which integration is possible.⁴ But all integrationists share an openness to the contribution of modern psychotherapy.⁵

Most debate over the validity of integration has focused either on the doctrine of general revelation or New Testament passages dealing with the sufficiency of Christ or of Scripture or the giftedness of the church. But absent from the discussion is any serious engagement with the one area of Scripture that speaks most extensively to the issue of counseling, namely, Old Testament wisdom literature.⁶ This article addresses the integration question from the neglected viewpoint of Old Testament wisdom literature and the role of the sage in ancient Israel in relation to two questions: Where is wisdom to be found? What was the function of wisdom in the Old Testament community of faith?

SOURCES OF AUTHORITATIVE KNOWLEDGE

WISDOM AS A VOICE OF MORAL AUTHORITY

According to Proverbs the way of wisdom leads to upright and blameless character, a life lived in the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:1–7; 2:1–22; 8:1–21). As wisdom and the way of righteousness are the same path, so a “wise man” and a “righteous man” are synonymous (8:20; 9:9). In defining wisdom, Crenshaw takes as his starting point the defense of Job (Job 31), whose “ethical conduct is a moral code which soars to lofty heights not even surpassed in the Sermon on the Mount.”⁷ As early as the 1970s, psychotherapists were calling for the realization that counseling cannot take place in a moral vacuum.⁸ Exactly how moral values are brought to bear in the process of counseling is an important issue, though beyond the scope of this article. But Old Testament wisdom insists that human behavior is inherently ethical and accountable to God’s moral mandate, and so the voice of wisdom must be heard.

The moral authority of wisdom as presented in the Scriptures is assumed. But what if biblical wisdom itself encourages individuals to search for truth beyond the canon of Scripture? This is not to suggest that extrabiblical wisdom is equal to scripture in authority or infallibility. But, if it is true that wisdom outside the Bible is a valid source, then Old Testament wisdom dictates that it be respected, evaluated, and incorporated into instruction for life. A good example of this is the wisdom of parents to children (Prov. 4:1). Unless the parent is quoting Scripture, such wisdom originates from beyond the boundaries of the biblical canon; yet it bears a degree of authority. Proverbs endorses the wisdom of kings and older men (16:10; 20:29). The counsel of Ahithophel was revered in the royal court as much as was the word of God (2 Sam. 16:23). When such wisdom becomes popularized, it bears broad, cultural authority.⁹ That is the very nature of a proverb.¹⁰ Some canonical proverbs may have originated as folk sayings in the family,¹¹ and others may have arisen in the royal court.¹² But two sources acknowledged by Old Testament wisdom literature are particularly relevant to the discussion of integration: wisdom in creation and wisdom in international influence.

WISDOM AND CREATION

Wisdom is embodied in creation (Job 28:23; Ps. 104:24; Prov. 3:19; 8:22–31), and therefore it expresses truth about God and His world.¹³ In the words of Kidner, creation is “a single system, a universe, and what is invited is the study of it in a spirit of humility, so that we may take our due place within it willingly and intelligently.”¹⁴

Solomon epitomized the way of wisdom by his exploration of the natural world (1 Kings 4:33). No taxonomical lists have been preserved from ancient Israel; however, it is apparent that such observations were put into the service of moral instruction. Murphy put it this way: “The sages analyzed the environment—the created world and its inhabitants—for signs and for conclusions (Prov. 17:1; 25:13). They drew analogies and made comparisons between things, living and non-living (Prov. 25:14; 26:2). In the animal world there were the very small that were, at the same time, very wise: ants, locusts and lizards (Prov. 30:24–28). Job could taunt the three friends to ask the beasts and birds of the air to teach them (Job 12:7). It has been well said that when the Lord ‘replies’ to Job he lets nature do the talking (Job 38–41).”¹⁵

In a similar fashion Forti observes, “It is in the didactic nature of wisdom literature and in its search for norms of behavior and principles of social order that the animal world finds its significance; in particular, it provides a frame of reference in the search for cosmic order which should be imitated by human beings.”¹⁶ He adds, “Empirical knowledge of fauna phenomena and universal truths provide the Sage with figurative illustrations for his argument and add to his authoritative credibility.”¹⁷

Thus the physical creation is a source of truth. Also wisdom literature encourages an openness to learning from the experiences of life. This type of inquiry is explicit in both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. “I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw” (Prov. 24:32, NIV). “I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven” (Eccles. 1:13, NIV; cf. 2:3; 7:25). Of course

conclusions from such study are ultimately subordinate to faith in God (12:13–14). However, the method itself is valued as part of seeking wisdom. So wisdom utilizes empirical observation of human behavior. Some observations conclude with an admonition (Prov. 20:19); some render a judgment, implying the right course of action (20:3, 10); and others are pure observation, leaving the application to the reader. An example of this third means is Proverbs 13:12: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life” (NIV). “This is a psychological observation. It does not attempt to teach a lesson or make a judgment about life-style. It informs the reader about reality. Any use or application of this statement is a second move.”¹⁸ One task of wisdom, then, is to observe life. A second task of wisdom is to incorporate such observations into a course of action.

Wisdom presents the world as an open laboratory. The conclusions of the empirical method that became inscripturated (e.g., the Book of Proverbs) are infallible in their authority because of divine inspiration.¹⁹ But wisdom encourages an ongoing observation of creation and of human behavior to enable individuals to grow in wisdom beyond the maxims included in the canon of Scripture. So human wisdom, while imperfect and fallible, is a source for instruction in life.²⁰

WISDOM AND ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE

Wisdom finds a voice in creation, but Old Testament wisdom also expresses appreciation of wisdom found outside the community of faith, occasionally integrating non-Israelite wisdom into the canon of Scripture. According to 1 Kings 4:30–31, God gave Solomon wisdom that “surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt . . . and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations.” Such fame was not because Solomon’s wisdom was entirely different from the wisdom of the world, but because it surpassed it in degree.²¹ Kidner notes that the Old Testament “speaks of the gentile sages with a respect it never shows towards their priests and prophets.”²²

Actual incorporation of ancient Near-Eastern wisdom traditions within the Book of Proverbs underscores this point.²³ The “words of King Lemuel” (Prov. 31:1–9 [or 31:1–31?]) are non-Israelite, and this may also be true of the “words of Agur” (30:1–33). Proverbs 22:17–24:22 shares a number of parallels with the Egyptian “Instruction of Amenemope.” Although direct literary dependence of Proverbs on Amenemope is not universally accepted, the existence of an extract from Amenemope dating before the time of Solomon suggests that Proverbs 22–24 depends on an Egyptian wisdom tradition close to Amenemope, if not on a version of Amenemope itself. Overland has shown that the parallels extend beyond individual proverbs to the chapter structure as well.²⁴ Other verses in Proverbs bear striking similarity to older Egyptian as well as Mesopotamian literature.²⁵ Summarizing the comparison between Egyptian wisdom and Proverbs, Walton concludes, “In the end, it cannot be denied that Israelite wisdom shares much with the wisdom of Egypt, and there is no reason to doubt or deny that the Israelites were aware of and influenced by Egyptian literature.”²⁶ The Old Testament wisdom writers shared a common intellectual tradition with ancient Near Eastern culture, from which they gleaned wisdom and which they adapted to their faith in Yahweh.²⁷

THE FUNCTION OF THE SAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

What did the exercise of wisdom look like in practice? Family instruction and court counsel are two functions evident in Old Testament times. In addition, several narrative passages in Samuel and Kings provide more explicit illustrations of the role of the sage and the use of wisdom in ancient Israel. Caution is warranted when drawing conclusions from the narrative on topics the author(s) was not explicitly addressing. Many attempts at psychological integration are guided more by modern theories or practices that are thought to be illustrated in the text than by what the narrative is designed specifically to teach. For example 1 Kings 19 is often used to teach about therapeutic intervention for depression, even though the passage only describes an instance when God ministered to a distressed man of faith. Nevertheless passages describing the role of the sage illuminate the use of wisdom in a general way, thereby informing one's understanding of the way wisdom was intended to operate in the culture that inscripturated it. One such passage, 1 Kings 3:16–28, was explicitly intended to illustrate and thereby demonstrate the wisdom of Solomon.

SOLOMON'S WISDOM IN 1 KINGS 3:16–28

This passage speaks of the wisdom of Solomon. Wisdom was a necessary attribute of monarchs in the ancient Near East.²⁸ The fact that the context is a judicial setting does not negate the lessons about the nature and use of wisdom in general. What is striking is the rather unconventional manner in which Solomon settled the dispute between two women of the same household—unconventional, that is, by modern standards of judicial proceedings. Rather than call for the Torah scroll from which to examine statutory or case law, Solomon called for a sword. Presumably, his perception of the nature of a mother's way with her child offered a way of cutting through the deadlock. Solomon's wisdom, drawn from insight into human nature, brought about a change in behavior that resulted in moral resolve.

THE WISE WOMEN OF 2 SAMUEL

Second Samuel 13–20 chronicles the revolt of Absalom and its aftermath. At two critical junctures, "wise women" were called on to influence the course of events. The role of these women illustrates important lessons about the nature and use of wisdom. First, while neither woman resided in an official court setting, their somewhat professional capacity is suggested by the fact that a simple adjectival designation ("wise women") is all that was necessary to identify them (14:2; 20:16).²⁹ Not just any person was qualified for such situations. Known for their exceptional sagacity, these women were called on in time of crisis.³⁰ Second, their interventions utilized story and proverb, not covenant law, even though it could have been applied.

In 2 Samuel 14, David was well aware of the legal conventions bearing on his own dilemma. He drew on them to judge the woman's fictitious case. The woman of Tekoa crafted a story to draw David's more objective judgment to bear on a case she could then transform into his own. It was not until after wise intervention that David could act.

Camp writes, "Although they did not apply our modern terminology of "literatherapy" to this technique, there can be little doubt that these OT 'psychologists' had full awareness of its efficacy."³¹

The wise women also utilized proverbs. The wise woman of Abel utilized a proverb from folk wisdom with authority sufficient to stop the actions of a general. The woman from Tekoa cited a proverb known also from the Book of Proverbs. Both 2 Samuel 14:14a and Proverbs 17:14a express the same simile of identification, except that each draws a different moral conclusion.³² Adapting the same observations from nature to different situations was an evidence of wisdom. Wisdom is also critical to discern when and how to apply various principles to life.³³ Similarly, Old Testament case law helps in the application of apodictic law, but even case law cannot cover every situation. So Solomon prayed for wisdom to discern and judge (1 Kings 3:8-9). In this sense even law codes were subordinate to wisdom.

WISDOM AND LAW

It is necessary to digress at this point to address the relationship between wisdom and the Old Testament law more directly. Parallels between Old Testament law codes and Proverbs have been cited as evidence for influence in both directions.³⁴ Without denying their unique qualities of divine origin, it is fair to say that both Old Testament law and Old Testament wisdom shared much in common with the broad, cultural customs of Old Testament times. These topics in both the law code and wisdom literature (e.g., the inviolability of boundary markers; Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Prov. 22:28; 23:10) express the moral consensus of ancient Near Eastern culture in general.³⁵ So while sages knew the covenant law code, the wisdom tradition did not always utilize that Law directly in the formulation of proverbs.³⁶ The moral content of Old Testament wisdom was consistent with covenant law (Deut. 4:5-6), but wisdom is broader.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of these examples for the question of integration in counseling are significant. First, some situations call for expertise from specialists within the covenant community, namely, professional counselors. Second, wisdom is creative and often unconventional. Methods of counseling intervention are not limited to those techniques that can be derived explicitly from Scripture.³⁷ Third, the use of the Bible in counseling is not mandatory in order for the counseling to be "biblical." Up to this point the term "Law" has been used in the narrow sense of "covenant stipulations" or "Law code." But wisdom itself is "law" in the broader sense of "instruction" (Prov. 4:1). But if wisdom functions independently of the covenant code in the Old Testament, the implication is that wisdom can function without utilizing written imperatives in general (whether covenant Law code, canonical wisdom literature itself, or New Testament imperatives). Fourth, the use of the Bible is subject to wisdom, particularly in the realm of application. For example, Proverbs teaches that corporal punishment is "biblical." However, when and how it is employed is left almost entirely to a wisdom tradition that is outside the

Bible. Also, real-life situations are complex, with a variety of biblical principles that might apply. Deciding which principles are “weightier” is often the judgment of wisdom.

WISDOM PIETY

Wisdom advises individuals to submit to the mystery and sovereignty of God (Job 42:1–6; Prov. 20:24; 21:30). Conversely, thinking oneself wise betrays a hopeless inner state (Prov. 26:12).³⁸ Therefore at the heart of wisdom is a deep piety referred to as “the fear of the Lord” (1:7, 3:7). It is with this theme that wisdom approaches the most severe crises of human experience. When faced with hard choices in life, why should one choose moral skill over self-gratification (Proverbs)? How does one survive the anguish of painful tragedy (Job)? What is the sense of living in such an uncertain world (Ecclesiastes)? There is no ultimate response to these questions apart from deep faith in the sovereign Creator and just Ruler of the universe. The secret of skillful living lies in the fear of the Lord. As Kidner writes, “In one form or another this truth meets us in all the wisdom books, and it is this that keeps the shrewdness of Proverbs from slipping into mere self-interest, the perplexity of Job from mutiny, and the disillusion of Ecclesiastes from final despair.”³⁹

The influence of wisdom tradition on the Book of Psalms reveals another important expression of wisdom piety. While wisdom draws from sources outside the canon of Scripture, it also venerates God’s written Word as a perfect light that guides the path of life with refreshment and strength (Pss. 19:7–8, 10; 119:25, 28, 105, 107). God’s Word defines the contrast between the lifestyles of the righteous and the wicked (Pss. 1:1–2, 37:30–32; 119:1, 109–115).⁴⁰ The relationship between God’s revealed Word and wisdom is addressed by the prophets. Jeremiah warned that even wisdom that is derived entirely from Scripture can be false when the text is mishandled (Jer. 8:8–10). But in general the prophets underscored the limits of human wisdom compared to the sure authority of God’s Word and will (Isa. 29:14; 44:24–25; Jer. 9:28; Ezek. 28:2–19). Therefore Scripture guides the appropriation of knowledge from other sources; and in counseling, the value content, theoretical orientation, and methods of psychotherapy are ultimately subordinate to biblical theology and ethics.

CONCLUSION

What has the voice of wisdom to say concerning the integration debate in Christian counseling? The wisdom literature of the Old Testament invites the study of human nature, behavior, and change from sources outside the canon of Scripture as well as in Scripture itself. Wisdom also exemplifies the use of methods that neither emerge exegetically from the Bible nor utilize the words of Scripture itself. Even when Scripture is used, wisdom often dictates which texts are most appropriate for a given situation and how application needs to take shape. At the same time, wise counselors recognize that the Bible is the only perfect authority for guiding faith and practice. Since the essence of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, a heart of adoration and submission to God is the foundation for skillful living, especially in the face of life’s most severe experiences. Not

only in counseling, but in all aspects of life, wisdom calls for a deeper reverence for God in conforming one's life to the Creator's design.

¹ Tim Stafford, "The Therapeutic Revolution: How Christian Counseling Is Changing the Church," *Christianity Today*, May 17, 1993, 24–32; Robert C. Roberts, "Psychobabble," *Christianity Today*, May 16, 1994, 18–24; Steven Rabey, "Hurting Helpers," *Christianity Today*, September 16, 1996, 76–80, 108–10; and Gary R. Habermas, "Psychological Counseling vs. Biblical Counseling: A House Divided?" *Christian Counseling Today*, October 1993, 32–35.

² Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970); Deidre Bobgan and Martin Bobgan, *Prophets of Psychoheresy* (Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate, 1989); and John F. MacArthur Jr., *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1991). Even the most conservative wing of the "biblical counseling" movement, the Bible-based nouthetic approach, has been criticized for creating an elite class of Christians who alone are competent to counsel (Martin Bobgan and Deidre Bobgan, *Against Biblical Counseling: For the Bible* [Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate, 1994]).

³ Early attempts include J. D. Carter and Bruce Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) and Gary R. Collins, *The Rebuilding of Psychology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1977). More recent efforts include those of David G. Meyers and Malcolm A. Jeeves, *Psychology through the Eyes of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); Darrell Smith, *Integrative Therapy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990); and Stanton Jones and Richard Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991).

⁴ Critics of psychology have not always understood the diversity within the field of psychotherapy. For example marriage and family therapy is a growing profession within the psychotherapy field that utilizes a systemic theoretical orientation quite distinct from psychological models. In fact debate between family therapists and psychologists is as heated as anything within the evangelical community over integration. Critics of psychology seem unaware that family systems theory exists as a distinct model. For an example of a Christian integrating family systems orientation, see Everett L. Worthington Jr., *Marriage Counseling: A Christian Approach to Counseling Couples* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989).

⁵ Some who are close to center on the spectrum of debate have expressed concern over the progress of integration. Powlison, for example, is convinced that the church has already been inundated with adverse consequences in spite of the integrationists' agenda to use biblical controls (David Powlison, "Integration or Inundation?" in *Power Religion*, ed. Michael Scott Horton [Chicago: Moody, 1992], 191–218). Larry Crabb, while not

denying the value of psychology, contends that the biblical model of shepherding by elders must replace the current proclivity toward referring counselees to professionals (“Putting an End to Christian Psychology,” *Christianity Today*, August 14, 1995, 16–17).

⁶ Numerous New Testament verses touch on the efficacy of the Word and the Holy Spirit or the potential for Christians to exhort and encourage each other. However, Old Testament wisdom literature—which directly addresses skillful living in human relationships, how to endure the deepest struggles of life, and the idea of “counsel”—comprises a large portion of the Old Testament.

⁷ James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* (Atlanta: Knox, 1981), 14. Wisdom in the Old Testament is not always the embodiment of right ethical conduct (2 Sam. 13:3, 17:6–14). In cases where wisdom is put into the service of evil it is reduced to mere shrewdness (R. N. Whybray, “The Sage in the Israelite Royal Court,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John G. Gammie and Leo Perdue [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 135). In general, however, wisdom means living life with moral skill.

⁸ For example see Lois N. Glasser and Paul H. Glasser, “Hedonism and the Family: Conflict in Values?” *Journal of Marriage and Family Counseling* 3 (October 1977): 11–18; Allen E. Bergin, “Psychotherapy and Religious Values,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 48 (1980): 95–105; Harry J. Aponte, “The Negotiation of Values in Therapy,” *Family Process* 24 (1985): 323–38; and William J. Doherty, *Soul Searching: Why Psychotherapy Must Promote Moral Responsibility* (New York: Basic, 1995).

⁹ A modern example of a popularized memorable saying from a respected leader is former president John F. Kennedy’s famous admonition, “Ask yourself not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

¹⁰ William Bennett’s anthology of classic proverbs, stories, and fables is an attempt to reestablish cultural morals based on the authority of popularly accepted literature (*The Book of Virtues* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993]).

¹¹ Joseph Blenkinsopp suggests that a moral consensus emerging from tribal and family traditions may be at the root of many proverbial sayings (*Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* [Louisville: Westminster Knox, 1995], 23–28). See also Carole R. Fontaine, “The Sage in Family and Tribe,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 155–64; and Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 3–4.

¹² Whybray, “The Sage in the Israelite Royal Court,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 133–39; Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 28–32; and Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 4–5. James Crenshaw argues that no single source can account for the diversity and complexity of Israelite wisdom literature (“The Sage in Proverbs,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 214).

¹³ Wisdom was an attribute displayed by God in the work of creation. By deduction it may be assumed that this attribute of the Creator is conveyed to a lesser extent to His creation (Rom. 1:20). In similar fashion creation displays the glory of God (Ps. 19:1–4). Roland Murphy argues that for ancient Israel wisdom in creation was the revelation of God. Both natural and revealed knowledge “were apprehended by faith as expressions of truth about God and his world” (“Wisdom and Creation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 [1985]: 9–10). However, his view that Israelites did not distinguish between natural and revealed knowledge goes beyond the evidence.

¹⁴ Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 12.

¹⁵ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 113.

¹⁶ Tova Forti, “Animal Images in the Didactic Rhetoric of the Book of Proverbs,” *Biblica* 77 (1996): 49.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁸ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 8.

¹⁹ The word “infallible” is used here not to skirt the fact of “inerrancy,” which more specifically affirms the veracity of Scripture, but to emphasize the trustworthiness of Scripture in recording the intent of its divine Author.

²⁰ Walter C. Kaiser Jr. suggests that “creation ordinances,” the work of God depicting “the constitution of things,” are a basis for making ethical decisions (*Toward Old Testament Ethics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], 31).

²¹ Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes*, 15.

²² See also Isaiah 47:10; Jeremiah 49:7; Ezekiel 28:3; Daniel 1:4, 20; Obadiah 8; Zechariah 9:2 (Derek Kidner, *Proverbs* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1964], 17).

²³ The books of Job and Ecclesiastes share similar themes and forms with some Mesopotamian and Egyptian wisdom literature; however, direct foreign influence is not demonstrable, except perhaps for the “vanity of vanities” theme of Ecclesiastes. See W. G. Lambert, “Some New Babylonian Wisdom Literature,” in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton*, ed. John Day, Robert Gordon, and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30–42.

²⁴ Paul Overland, “Structure in *The Wisdom of Amenemope* and Proverbs,” in “*Go to the Land I Will Show You*”: *Studies In Honor of Dwight W. Young*, ed. Joseph E. Coleson and Victor H. Matthews (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 275–91. The Israelite sage used the initial topic sentence and/or the climax of a given chapter of *Amenemope*, a method Overland calls “telescoping.”

²⁵ Compare Proverbs 15:16–17 with *Amenemope* 9.5–8; Proverbs 16:9 with *Amenemope* 19.16; Proverbs 20:22 with *Amenemope* 22.3–4, 7–8; Proverbs 15:8 (and 1 Sam. 15:22) with *The Instruction to Merikare* 129; and Proverbs 24:17, 29; 25:21 with the Mesopotamian *Counsels of Wisdom* 40 as well as *Amenemope* 5.1–5 (Bruce K. Waltke,

"The Book of Proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136 [July–September 1979]: 234–35; Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes*, 127–30; and John Day, "Foreign Semitic Influence on the Wisdom of Israel and Its Appropriation in the Book of Proverbs," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, 55–70). While not all the parallels Day presents are equally convincing, they are ample enough to demonstrate a shared world of wisdom.

²⁶ John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 196–97. Regarding later Hebrew wisdom literature, Blenkinsopp notes the use of pagan sources by Ben Sira in spite of his suspicion of Greek wisdom (Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 19).

²⁷ The scribe frequently made suitable adjustments to reflect his own culture or theology, such as the substitution of the divine name Yahweh in Proverbs 22:23a for the Egyptian god Thoth in Amenemope 4.19 (Overland, "Structure in *The Wisdom of Amenemope* and Proverbs," 284). Reflecting on the integration of non-Israelite wisdom into the biblical context, Allen Ross writes, "Any ancient wisdom used by the Hebrews had to harmonize with this [i.e., Yahwistic] religious world view, and any ancient wisdom used in this collection took on greater significance when subordinated to the truth faith" ("Proverbs," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991] 5:885). This is similar to the use of other extrabiblical material in the Bible. Regarding the use of creation themes in Job, Hans-Jurgen Hermisson concludes, "Wisdom incorporated the myth of the chaos struggle in thorough accordance with Yahwistic faith" ("Observations on Creation Theology in Wisdom," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*, ed. John G. Gammie et al. [New York: Scholars, 1978], 54).

²⁸ André Lemaire, "Wisdom in Solomonic Historiography," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, 113.

²⁹ R. N. Whybray argues that there was no distinct professional class of "sage" (*The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974]). For a contrary opinion, see André Lemaire, "The Sage in School and Temple," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 165–81, esp. 174. Whether professional or not, these women were distinctly recognized for their exceptional skill in negotiation and influence of human behavior.

³⁰ How much of the strategy of the woman from Tekoa should be attributed to Joab is disputed. Since the course of her conversation with David would have been unpredictable, the success of her plan depended in large measure on her wit in such unpredictable circumstances (Claudia V. Camp, "The Wise Women of 2 Samuel: A Role Model for Women in Early Israel?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 [1981]: 17, n. 8). As Ronald Youngblood comments, "She, after all, is the one who is called 'wise'" ("1, 2 Samuel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 3 [1972]: 975). Someone may argue that the woman's behavior was evil. However, the motive and end to which she applied her skills are beside the point. Her method was illustrative of wisdom.

³¹ Camp, "The Wise Women of 2 Samuel," 21–22. This technique was also employed by Nathan (2 Sam. 12) and was a rhetorical technique used by other prophets (e.g., Isa. 5:1–4).

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Consider the popular proverbs: "A stitch in time saves nine" against "Haste makes waste"; or "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" against "Out of sight out of mind." A wise person knows the proverbs but also discerns when these seemingly contradictory principles apply. Proverbs 26:4–5 offers a biblical example of similar challenge.

³⁴ Walter C. Kaiser Jr. cites the similarities as evidence that wisdom literature is rooted in covenant law (Toward an *Old Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978], 166–67). Joseph Blenkinsopp argues the reverse, namely, that the wisdom tradition was formative for Deuteronomy (*Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983]).

³⁵ General respect for boundary markers is evidenced in Job 24:2; Instruction of Amenemope 7.12 (Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976], 2:151); Middle Assyrian Laws B.8 (James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969], 186); and Hittite Laws ii.168–69 (*ibid.*, 195). See also A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 123; and S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1978), 234.

³⁶ R. N. Whybray remarks, "No part of Proverbs identifies wisdom with the Law" ("The Social World of the Wisdom Writers," *The World of Ancient Israel*, ed. Roland E. Clements [Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 237–38). Bruce K. Waltke recently concluded that the only possible example of intertextuality between Proverbs and the Torah is Proverbs 30:5–6, where Agur speaks as a prophet ("Is There Theological Relevance to the Structure of Proverbs?" [paper read at the Northwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, February 24, 1996]). The absence of law in Proverbs has also been noted by James L. Crenshaw ("The Deuteronomists and the Writings" [paper read in the Deuteronomistic Section at the annual meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature, November 23, 1996]). The influence of wisdom on the Book of Psalms is seen in the book's appreciation for the written Law (e.g., Pss. 1; 19; 119); however, the point here is that law codes are not necessarily manifest in the exercise of wisdom.

³⁷ Larry Crabb has insisted that "counseling models must demonstrate more than consistency with Scripture; they must in fact emerge from it" (*Understanding People* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 29). However, this insistence does not cohere with the nature and function of Old Testament wisdom.

³⁸ Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 98–102.

³⁹ Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes*, 17.

⁴⁰ J. Kenneth Kuntz, "The Canonical Wisdom Psalms of Ancient Israel—Their Rhetorical, Thematic, and Formal Dimensions," in *Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Jared J. Jackson and Martin Kessler (Pittsburg: Pickwick, 1974), 211–13.