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RELIGIOUS VIEWS
in the
BOOK OF PROVERBS

THESIS

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1918

Mic. 9/78

TO
MY BELOVED FATHER AND MOTHER

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RELIGIOUS VIEWS IN THE PROVERBS

INTRODUCTION

A. General statement concerning the Wisdom Literature

The name "Wisdom Literature" is ascribed to that class of Hebraic literature which bears the impress of the spirit of *חכמה*. It embraces works in the Old Testament and in the Apocrypha. The *former* group includes Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and certain Psalms; the latter, comprises Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. The birthday of this literature is now, by general consent, placed after the Babylonian exile.

Until quite recently, many scholars regarded the Wisdom Literature as a product of forces and influences native to the Hebrew race alone, a product untouched by external events or transformations, though admissions have sometimes been made that its latest portions were modified by Greek culture. (a) They have said that this literature cannot be confined to a single period of Jewish history. Wisdom was a permanent, uninterrupted, and exclusive bent of the Hebrew mind, operative throughout the entire history of the nation and throwing off its literary productions at widely separated stages of its development. Beginning with Solomon, it is supposed to have been cultivated by a succession of sages or wise men, who ultimately rose to a position of importance as a regular teaching profession or guild. From this class, there developed and emanated, from time to time, that series of writings grouped under the head of the Wisdom Literature.

a. Siegfried, Hastings DB, Wisdom.

In the early literature, something might be found which would incline one to favor the forgoing view. There are examples of the use of riddles, allegories and maxims which some may regard as the forerunners of the late works of the wise men. No certain indication exists, however, that these scattered pre-exilic expressions formed a developed literature distinct from the prophets, law-givers, and historians. For, in none of these cases, Wisdom assumed the moralizing trend, so characteristic of it in the post-exile. Again, these examples are so few and far between that it is unwarranted to build upon them as a basis the theory ~~that~~ of the existence of a particular literature. But humble beginnings had been made, and the way prepared for new influences to awaken to life a vigorous literature on the Wisdom basis.

The tendency of modern Biblical criticism has been to draw together the separate products of the Wisdom writing within a comparatively narrow compass of time and to assign their composition ^(or compilation) to one stage in the history of Jewish religion. Just as we can speak of a golden age of prophecy or an age of legalism, so there is a period which was preeminently the age of Wisdom, an age when its peculiar mode of thinking was in the ascendancy, and when it formed a vital contribution to the development of Jewish thought and ideals. If this theory is entertained, there can obviously be no question as to the particular time to which the movement is to be assigned. It must have been the age immediately preceding the Maccabean rebellion---that great upheaval which, by universal acknowledgement, divides post-exilic Judaism into two dissimilar phases. On the eve of that conflict Jesus ben Sirach lived and wrote; the Wisdom of Solomon was produced within the first century; Ecclesiastes certainly can

A. Hellebach, Kommentar, 32.

300 B.C.E.

not be ~~much~~ earlier than ~~300 B.C.E.~~: the two remaining books, Job and Proverbs must be given a date considerable earlier than the former. Job was probably written about the first quarter of the fourth century. Thus, from about the end of the first century before the Christian era backwards for perhaps two and a half centuries is the period which is to be considered the golden age of Hebrew Wisdom. There can be no doubt that within that tract of time influences were operative which, we will presently see, were inextricably bound up with the presence of 7507.

The beginnings of Hebrew Wisdom may be ultimately traced to certain primitive instincts and habits of thought congenial to the Semitic mind. A faculty of close observation of nature and human life joined to the love of sententious and eloquent speech constitute perhaps the mental endowment which effloresced in the form of written Wisdom. A collection of Arabic proverbs by Mediani shows that this species of wisdom had been popular among the Arabs for many centuries.

Preparation for the growth of the Wisdom Literature had been laid in the prophetic teachings and writings. A highly developed ^ethics had arisen which, because of the internal changes wrought by the exile, engrossed the attention of the people. In the exile there took place the transfer of religious interests from the temple cultus to the study of the moral law. The synagogue was substituted for the state as the basis of religious fellowship. The loss of the kingdom had materially affected the national religious conceptions of the people, which were gradually superseded by individual ideas and judgments. By reason of this change, the concrete personal message of the prophets came to occupy the foreground. The exile stimulated individuals to know the elements of right conduct according to prophet-

ical teaching and insight. Practical morality was studied; individual ethics was cultivated. It is readily seen that this process was one in which the rising concepts of *אֱלֹהִים* were fitted to play an important *part*.

In addition to bringing about an alteration in their internal circumstances, the exile effected the Jews externally through the various civilizations with which they were thrown in intimate contact. It witnessed the dispersion of the Jews to different quarters of the globe, particularly to Babylon. Soon after, the Persian conquest threw open the great stores of the Persian religion. The influence of Babylonian thought was already active. The press of Greek culture was felt later. Needless to say, the religions of antiquity cannot be altogether excluded from each other's influence. Thro the medium of vast and immemorial civilizations, they undoubtedly acted on and interpenetrated one another at least to a reasonable extent. The Jewish religion doubtlessly gained from rubbing shoulders with these foreign civilizations. It was aroused to new life and vigor. A movement sprang into being, a movement securely founded upon the conception of ethical monotheism achieved by the prophets, but centering around the old Hebrew *אֱלֹהִים* which the sages filled with a new meaning born of a new age. (a)

B/ Proverbs

Most probably, the book of Proverbs originated in the consciousness that if individuals were to become righteous (and this was known to be the condition of divine favor) there should

a. J/Skinner, Cosmopolitan Aspects of Hebrew Wisdom, J.Q.R. XVII, 240-262

be some attractive presentation of moral verities. The idea appears to have arisen that an abstract of religious truths should be made to the end that everybody could understand, appreciate and live by them. To put the matter in another way, born of the exilic period was a class of new leaders, the wise men, who recognized the need of applying the principles of prophetic religion to the details of human life. This always happens; wherever there is a highly developed ethics, maxims will be written. Hence it was that in the exile where such ethics existed, the wise men set themselves to the task of formulating sayings by which men could guide themselves in the manifold situations of life. The result of their activity is observed in the book of Proverbs, an early, perhaps the earliest product of the Wisdom movement.

Canonicity. Doubts that may have arisen as to the canonicity of Proverbs possibly resulted from its being classed with Ecclesiastes. The authority of the book was, however, never seriously questioned. The well-known passage in Shabbath 30b, ^(a) of Proverbs "Some desired to withdraw the book from use, because it contained internal contradictions," (e.g. XXVI, 4, 5) but the attempt was abandoned because the wise men declared, "We have examined more deeply into the book of Ecclesiastes and have discovered the solution of the difficulty; here also we wish to inquire more deeply." (See also Aboth R/Nathan cap. I). From these citations, it is evident that if Proverbs' canonicity was ever impeached, it was done on the same internal grounds as the book of Ecclesiastes and that it was never at any moment in danger of being absolutely rejected. The removal of all doubts concerning Ryle, the Canon of the OT., 204.

ing the canonicity of Ecclesiastes sufficed to allay all apprehensions about Proverbs on the same score.

Name. The book of Proverbs styles itself Mishle Shalome. This title which is found at the head of the book recurs at the beginning of chapter 10. In later Jewish usage, the book was simply known as Mishle. The title Wisdom was also common in Jewish circles. That this was the case is proven by the opening sentence of the Midrash to Proverbs, "And Wisdom, where can it be found?" (Taken from Job XXVIII, 12)/ Its author merely bore in mind the fact that Proverbs deals with wisdom, a term obviously used to define the contents of all the wisdom books.

Divisions(a) The different titles which occur in Proverbs combined with differences in nature and content of portions of the book indicate that Proverbs breaks up into several divisions.

a. I) IX, comprising the title (I, 1), the purpose (I, 2--6), and the fundamental law of the book (I, 7). The passage contained in VIII, 22-31 is extraneous. Its doctrine of wisdom as the logos is foreign to the general idea of wisdom which the whole book contains. Consequently, it will be given little consideration in our treatment of the subject of wisdom. The style of this section is flowing and, in this respect, it stands in strong contrast to the rest of the book. Instead of a series of thoughts each forcibly expressed but disconnected with one another, a thought is here developed at length and presented from different points of view. The style suggests pronounced prophetic influences at work upon the author. His aim was undoubtedly to provide the collection of Proverbs, (10, 1 and following) with a hortatory introduction, commending the wisdom of which they were the expression (I, 1-6) and pointing to the dangers pro-

a. Toy, Intro., VI, Bertheau, Comm., X-XXI; Wildeboer, Comm., X-XI; Frankenberg, Comm., 246.

ment in his day from which those who listen to her teachings might be guarded.

b. 10,1-22,16 bears the title of "The Proverbs of Solomon." It is a collection of anhorisms mostly in couplet form. They are arranged in no particular order, though sometimes two or more dealing with the same subject (as 16,10,12-15 on kings; 18 and following on the fool) or containing the same more or less characteristic word (as 10,6 and following, the righteous; 10,13 and following, fool) occur in juxtaposition.

c. 22,17-24,22 and 24,23-34 are two separate divisions. The former are described as the "Words of the Wise" and the latter as "These also are sayings of the wise." The first is a body of maxims in which proverbs are interwoven and addressed with a practical aim to an individual. They are worked up usually into a more or less constructive argument. The second is possibly an appendix displaying a similar variety of form.

d. 25-29 with the title "These also are the Proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezikah, king of Judah, copied out." The superscription has no value as to the origin of this particular class of proverbs, and may be regarded in the same category as the titles found in the Psalter. This title is unreliable because the history of prophetic and historical writings makes it improbable that the collecting and editing of this literary material began as early as the reign of Hezekiah. The proverbs in this collection differ in a greater degree from those in b than from those in c. They appear to spring out of a changed state of society.

e. XXX-XXXI comprise a miscellaneous group of discourses

and numerical aphorisms. XXXIb-4 is ascribed to Agur. XXXI,1-9 bear the title "The words of Lemuel, a king, the oracle which his mother taught him." The rest of this chapter is a descrip^{tion} of a virtuous woman, the verses of which are arranged alphabetically. Both Agur and Lemuel are shadowy figures, and it is idle therefore to spend any time discussing these titles.

Origin. From the different character of the various collections, it is apparent that the book of Proverbs must have been formed gradually. The process of gathering the various sayings and collections of sayings and adding thereto probably extended over several centuries. The traditional view that Proverbs was composed by Solomon is without valid foundation. (a) In the Psalms and historical writings, titles are admittedly not authoritative. They are based on the desire to ascribe to the ideal characters of the past the works of later ages. Just as the titles to those writings have no documentary evidence, just so are the titles in Proverbs untrustworthy and false. It is quite impossible that Proverbs is the work of one author. This is borne out by repetitions which occur in the book. (In sections b and c XI,15 and XXII,26,27; XX,22 and XXI4,29; in b and d XVIII,8 and XXVI,22; XIX,1 and XXVIII,6; in c and d, XXIV,23 and XXVIII,21)..From these repetitions and others, we infer that collections b,c,and d were mutually independent. Sections a and e contain no repetitional matter; the peculiar tone of each of these divisions is strikingly different from the rest. Again, it is difficult to feel otherwise than that many of the proverbs are unsuitable to Solomon's character and position.

a. Smith, Intro.to OT 181; Ryle, Canon of OT 194.

The sayings concerning a king (XXV 3;XXIX,2,4,16) seem rather to express the sentiments of the people than the reflections of a king. Moreover, the proverbs which imply monogamy as a principle of happy marriage do not fall naturally from Solomon's lips. Hence, we must conclude that the traditional view which ascribes Proverbs to Solomon is without any valid proof/

With "the sages" the case is altogether different. The term does not specify individuals, but a class, and since it is apparently derived from the nature of the material, so far carries with it its own justification. Whether the sages were the authors of Proverbs is a task which can only be determined by an examination of the contents of the book.

Time. In the body of Proverbs can be found no historical data from which a date can be drawn. For the determination of the date, we must have recourse to internal evidence. Modern Biblical Criticism can be divided into two groups regarding the time of the origin of the book of Proverbs: namely, the pre-exilic and the post-exilic. In the former group can be found: Delitzsch (Kommentar 3ff.), Davidson (EBr 19,882), Bertheau (Kommentar XXXVIII), Driver (An Introduction 405-407), Strack (Die Sprüche Salomons 7), Pfeiffer (Die Religio-sittliche Weltanschauung 8) ^{Friedl. (Relig. u. Sittliche Ideen d. Sprüche 204-6)} The latter class includes among others; Cheyne (Jewish Religion after the exile 129, Job and Solomon 168,183), Frankenberg (Kommentar 6), Toy (Commentary XIXff.), Wildeboer (Kommentar XII)/It is seen that the time of the origin of Proverbs suffers greatly at the hands of critics. On the one hand William Wright(a) observes, "With the exception a. The Book of Proverbs in DB 2, 946.

of the last two chapters, which are distinctly assigned to other authors, it is probable, that the statement of the superscriptions is in the main correct and the majority of the proverbs contained in the book were written or collected by Solomon." On the other hand, Toy (a) sets the compilation at a very late date," Finally the work was completed by the addition of fragments in chs. 30,31, the completion falling in the second century B/C/" In spite of this great diversity of opinion as to the date of Proverbs, we shall find ^{that} after an examination of the evidence, little uncertainty will remain as to the approximate time of the origin of this work.

For the determination of the date of Proverbs, we must depend upon indirect evidence. The foremost guide for fixing the time is the progress of religious thought as illustrated by Proverbs. The book presupposes the prophetic message and thought. In the first place, there is no trace in Proverbs of the religious problems and conflicts of the pre-exilic period. The prophets, from Amos to Ezekiel, are in deadly fear of foreign cults and testify, during this whole period, that Israel is given over to the worship of other gods than YHWH. The polemic against such infidelity recurs again and again in prophetic literature. No word of all this can be found in Proverbs. There is no warning against idolatry. The absence of such warnings goes to show the post-exilic origin of the book. For, the tacit assumption of monotheism can hardly belong to an earlier period. Again, no mention of priests or prophets occurs; the sacrificial ritual is almost completely ignored. The omission of characteristic national traits is evident; the covenant with YHWH, Israel, the temple are terms that are missing here. It is difficult to understand how an author of the pre-exilic

a. Toy, Introd. XXX

the
period, who writes a work dealing with rules for guidance of individuals in the practical situations of life is so neglectful of these things. In fact, the religious ideas of Proverbs are non-national. They are conceived from an universalistic ethical viewpoint. Again, the social life represented in the Proverbs is a product of the post-exile. The system of education assumed as existing is of an advanced sort. Monogamy is taken for granted. To be true, agricultural pursuits are suggested, but the chief attention is given to city life with its vices and faults.

Having pointed out the post-exilic origin of Proverbs, we will now attempt to ^{fix} its approximate date. The book shows the fullest development of religious individualism, the beginning of which is signalized by Jeremiah's principle of moral freedom and individual responsibility. This principle sets at naught (a) the belief in communal solidarity prevailing in Israel up to the time of Jeremiah. From the time of Jeremiah, we get the earliest possible date of Proverbs. For, prior to his time, the principle of retributive justice which is so greatly emphasized in Proverbs could not have become so widespread. What is the latest possible date of Proverbs? It must have been written before certain eschatological notions had arisen. Proverbs nowhere admits of a belief in a world to come, a belief which permeated (b) the religious life of the Jews in the time of the Maccabees. Not therefore only must Proverbs ~~must~~ have been written before the Maccabees, but it must have been written at a time considerably earlier. Its language is good Hebrew. For its authors, Hebrew was a

a. Battenwieser, The Prophets of I, 322ff.
b. Battenwieser, Notes on Job.

living tongue. Now Hebrew entered upon a stage of decomposition at the beginning of the Hellenistic period when it ceased to be the spoken language and was superseded by Aramaic. Under the stern rule of the Aramaeans, when the Jews lost their independence completely, Hebrew died out. Moreover, we know that Isaiah 24-27, a passage which contains the belief in the future world, is written in good Hebrew, a fact which aids us in placing its date at the beginning of the Hellenistic period. About 400 B.C.E. was the time of the incipient stages of the belief of the future world. Thus on the ground of a lack of the belief in the world to come in Proverbs and on the further ground of its good Hebrew language, we arrive at the latest possible date of this work. It was about 400 B.C.E.

Whether Job was written before Proverbs or Proverbs before Job is a debatable question. The approximate date for Job is 425 B.C.E. Proverbs is a product of the belief in retributive justice, a belief in protest of which Job was written. We might, therefore, be inclined to say, on account of this attack upon this popular notion that Proverbs was written first. This conclusion would place the approximate date of Proverbs at 450 B.C.E.

A further consideration which leads us to fix the date of Proverbs during the first half of the fifth century is the unity of the group of Wisdom books. All are substantially identical in the philosophic point of view and in the ethical outlook. Moreover, the use of the terms Wisdom and Wise bear out this point. Toy makes clear (a) that over half these terms which occur in the Introduction, Toy, XXIV-XXV

cur in the Old Testament are found in the Wisdom books. Here they bear a specific moral meaning; whereas in the prophetic and Historical writings, they denote mechanical or artistic skill, a shrewd common sense. In the Wisdom Literature, they relate to the highest moral conception of life.

The history of the compilation of the various divisions of Proverbs is doubtful. It is possible that b, c, and d were placed together first and a parenthetic introduction was written for them, i.e., a. Chapters XXX and XXXI bear the earmarks of being appendices, which were added to the above collection.

Authors. The book of Proverbs suggests in a number of places the nature of its authors. It is a compilation of the utterances of individual sages, whose counsel is represented as the only safe guide to conduct (I-IV; XII, 17-21). They do not employ the prophetic formula, "Thus saith the Lord," nor do they appeal to the law of Moses. They speak out of their own minds, yet assuming the absolute authoritativeness of what they say. They were the product of the new movement of that time. Holding fast to the monotheism of the prophets and their concept of God as the supreme perfection, they took up the work of applying prophetic ethics to the life of the individual in all its situations. The wise men based their search after truth on the fundamental principle of the "fear of God." With this presupposition, they edited, remodelled, and added to the sayings of the fathers which had been handed down to them. (a) That the wise men formed a separate guild or professional class is unlikely.

a. Introd. to OT, 407, Driver

Thought. The book of Proverbs is far more than an epitome of versatile sayings. It is "a manual of conduct/" It is the road to success; it is the way to contentment; it is the rule of nobility of character. The world is regarded as moral, and the moral order reigns supreme. A certain utilitarian piety clings to many of its precepts, but this utilitarianism is far from being ignoble and base. The book had emanated from the love of Wisdom to incite to the love of Wisdom. Its observations refer to all details of life. Many of its sayings are secular. (XIV,18; XII,9; XIV,4; XXI,9) Others are distinctly ethical, looking to the establishment of a safe and sane, ^apeaceful individual and social life. (III,3; XIX,13) The religious tone of the Proverbs is different in the various divisions of Proverbs. It is least evident in d and most evident in a. The thought of the greater part of the book is definitely religious standing in sympathetic and reverent contact with the concept of a just and wise divine government of the world. The sages refer their Wisdom ultimately to God.

There is very little Eschatology in Proverbs. No supernatural beings, other than God, are mentioned. The sages dealing with everyday life, saw no occasion to refer to invisible administrative agencies. Neither life nor death is conceived in an eschatological sense as Hudal at some length shows. (a) Nor is there any indication of a belief in immortality. With Cheyne, ⁽²⁾ we can say that " Not one of the supposed references to immortality

a. Hudal, Religiöse u. Sittliche Ideen d. Spruchb., 236-248.

b. Cheyne, Jewish Relig. Life after Exile, 232.; JE, Bk. of Prov., X,

ity is trustworthy." The book contains no Messianic element. The sages took little interest in the hope of a restoration of national independence/ Being concerned with the study of a practical code of life, the coming of a Messiah or of a Messianic age was given no attention. (a) Sheol receives frequent mention in Proverbs. In II, 18; IX, 18, XXI, 16, and 2, 19, it is a place where shadows come to rest. Being insatiable XXVII, 20 and XXX, 15 and 16, it swallows all moral delinquents. Sheol as the abode of the dead has no moral significance. There is no judgment after death and the position of men in Sheol has no relation to their moral character. The underworld is a remote and mysterious region, XV, 11. and IX, 18. Abaddon is a synonym for Sheol and does not represent a lower region, XXVII, 20/

Character. None of the aphorisms in Proverbs are popular or folk-sayings. They are reflective and academic in tone, and must be regarded as a product of individual moralists living in a time of high moral culture. The book is more interested in practice than in creed. Its creed is very simple. It consists of the prophetic teachings applied endlessly to the individual moral life. The appeal of the book ignores revelation, and on the ground of experience, it meets the average person upon his everyday level. Its appeal is one which cannot be evaded as it commends itself to the universal moral instincts of mankind. Because of its extensive individual application of universal ethics, no other satisfactory explanation can be found than that Proverbs is a product of deep moral insight and reflection. (b)

a. C. G. Montefiore, Notes upon the Date and Relig. Value of Prov. J. Q. R., 1890, 435.

b. Wellhausen, Isrealit. u. jud. Geschichte, 221

RELIGIOUS VIEWS IN THE PROVERBS

CHAPTER I

THE GOD IDEA

The book of Proverbs is a reflection of the culture of the era of which it is a product. The dominant religious conceptions of its times are concentrated in it. Being a work of studied nature, it sheds forth the light of serious moral interests and careful observations. In our study of the work, we will see the truth of Nowack's statement, "This book as a whole has a decidedly religious character." (a)

The book of Proverbs is thoroughly imbued with the loftiest spiritual God-conception. It is true that the God idea is nowhere definitely drawn. It is assumed. But it is so strongly assumed that we can undeniably say that the God idea forms the central principle of Proverbs. The sages hold a firm belief in ethical monotheism with all that that belief implies. Their view is ethical in the sense that God rules the moral order with justice and righteousness. It is monotheistic in its representation of His will, absolute in power and wisdom, reigning triumphantly in the moral arrangement of things. This highest God conception is so real and vivid that it requires no defense, no championing, not even a statement descriptive of it; it is self-evident and axiomatic. In this respect, the sages had accepted as a matter of fact the highest reach of prophetic insight.

The authors of Proverbs indicate two ways by which they came to this strong recognition of God. Needless to say, they did not Nowack, in DB, 139

arrive at this highest conception by means of a long process of metaphysical speculation. Proverbs is not of that speculative nature. First, their profound conviction in the existence and reality of the highest Being, as the prophets had pictured Him, was necessitated by a mere recognition of His Will, manifesting itself in the moral world arrangement and overseeing the operation of eternal laws. A consideration of this moral world order presents the picture of the absolute justice and wisdom of God.

The second source of this God recognition is teleological. The sight of the wonderful works of creation prompts the belief in the greatness of their Ruler and Designer. This is found in XXV, 1b-4:

"I have wearied myself, O God, (a)

I have wearied myself, O God, and I am faint,

For I am stupid, beneath man's level,

And I have no human understanding.

I have not learned wisdom

So that I might comprehend the Holy One.

Who has ascended to heaven and descended?

Who has

Gathered the wind in his hand?

Who has bound the waters in his garment?

Who has fixed all the boundaries of the earth?

What is his name? and what is his son's name?

Surely thou knowest.

Toy understands Agur to be a man of "reverent agnosticism." (b)

a. Strack, Kommentar, 385

b. Toy, Commentary, 522

? of Hebrew
possibly a polemic
against those who
speculated too much
and claimed special
knowledge of
of your God's line
success

Dillon sets forth the theory that Agur is an agnostic imbued with Buddhistic speculation/ (a) His view is that Agur is a firm skeptic "as regards the fundamental doctrine of Jewish theology and his speculation received their impulse and direction from Indian theology." The author of this passage "showed no mercy to the theologians of his day, no respect for their dogmas of retribution, Messianism; He denies all divine revelation and strips the deity itself of every vestige of an attribute." On the other hand, Hudal believes that this passage shows that God can be conceived through revelation. (b) None of these views are correct. The trouble arises from the fact that their proponents try to read too much into Agur's clear statement.

XXX,ib-4 is of a purely religious fabric. Like Job, its author is a thoroughly reverent person possessed of a profound faith in God and His works. As in Job XXXVIII,5, and 18, the interrogator realizes the extent of human weakness and ignorance. With all the strength at his command, Agur strives for a knowledge of God, and in the end, concludes that his struggle is useless and that a complete knowledge of Him goes beyond human understanding. An insight into the innermost nature of God cannot be gained by mortal. (c) Nature, however manifests the greatness of the Eternal One. It suggests the creative power which has built and fashioned this earth. It indicates His Omnipotence with which all the physical forces are compelled to subject themselves to His Will and to His definite purposes. Even this knowledge is scanty in comparison to

4. Dillon, Sceptics of the OT, 151.a.

b. Hudal, Religiöse u. sitt. Ideen d. Spruch., 17

c. Delitzsch, Commentary, 273ff., also Rashi and Eben Ezra here. W.T. Davison, DB., Agur.

to the immeasurable height and depth of the God idea. In a word a glance at nature and her marvellous operations tends to give one a representation of its Creator and Supervisor. God Himself remains beyond man's capacity of comprehension. (a)

We have arrived at two sources of God recognition in the Proverbs. The first is the moral world order, governed by God, a government which we will later see is especially manifested in the requital. The second is the sight of the wonderful works of creation. These sources are the products of the ethical monotheism of the prophets.

A. The Omnipotence of God.

Transcendentalism. The transcendentalism of God is the starting point of the theology of Proverbs. While it is true that no specific mention can be found in the book that God is separated from the world and above it, yet this fact is the necessary hypothesis of all those sentences in which the creation of the world is ascribed to God. In III,19, we observe that by His wisdom He established the world:

"YHWH by wisdom founded the earth,

By understanding established the heavens."

In XXX,3-5, which have already been quoted, the transcendentalism of God stands in clear relief. In verses, XX,27, we note the idea of a spiritual world in which God is the Ruler. He is supreme in the realm of the spirit, even as He is in the material world. In this verse, the lamp is the Power which penetrates the soul of man.

"The spirit of man is the lamp of YHWH,

Searching all the chambers of the soul."

a. Davison, BB, Prov.

b. Pfeiffer, Relig. etc., d.B d. Spruche, 16

God's powerful personality is made plain in Proverbs. Although He is connected with the world by many bonds, a connection which is manifest in many ways, yet He stands above them all, unlimited in authority and sway. Between the world and God a definite line is drawn. The former is dependent upon the latter for its existence and continuity. This dependence is accentuated when Proverbs attaches the continuation of being to an act of His will:

"The poor and the oppressor meet together,

YHWH gives light to the eyes of both." (XXVII,13)

Creator. The transcendentalism of God answers the cause of being.^(a) God created the world and all that is therein, (III,19), He permits it to exist. (XXVII 13) He made all creatures, and set up classes among human beings:

"The rich and the poor stand side by side,

YHWH is the maker of them all." (XXII,2)

All of man's personal faculties are the gifts of God. (XX,12) It follows that as products of His will, men cannot comprehend fully all their experiences. (XX,24)

The Creator of all is responsible for all. All classes of men owe their life to Him who is moral perfection. This fact has its practical ethical bearings. The rich and the poor are conditioned by Him, stand under His control, and have to give an account to Him. (XXII,2b) He maintains their status. (XXIX,13) As a result, of the social differences which He created, all men as the creatures of God have their rights and mutual obligations. These should be fulfilled with kindness and respect; the lowly should love the exalted and the exalted should love the lowly. For a person who mocks the poor mocks Him who called a. Hudal, Rel.u.Sit.Id.d.Spr..27

the poor into existence and appointed them in their lowly place:

" He who mocks the poor reproaches His maker," (XVII,5)
On the other hand, he who gives a lift to the needy honors the Lord. (XIV,31) Thus do the sages, ascribing all to God, establish the religious basis of social responsibility.

The Creator is sovereign both in the material and spiritual worlds. His is the power to decide everyman's destiny. The idea contained in the commonplace saying, "man proposes, but God disposes " is found in XVI,9. No wisdom can be compared to that of the Almighty. (XXI,30) His sovereignty is complete. (XVI,33) It is therefore foolish to boast of what one will do, (XXVII,1), for the future belongs to God and no man can order anything beforehand. (a)

As a product of His wisdom, God founded the world after a definite plan. Its success and welfare is completely in His hand. Not only is the world established after a certain arrangement, but everything that is in it serves a specific purpose. (XVI,4) Naturally, God upholds this world order so that every thing ~~may~~ strive after its goal. The physical and moral orders are directed towards the goals which God has in complete view. All the different goals are conditioned by His will so that the will of God becomes the ultimate goal of creation. God's government of this plan is absolute. (XX,24) To put the matter in other words, the sages hold that God has not made a thing to serve a purpose, but to serve its purpose, i.e., a purpose premeditated by Him. The world of things and events stand under the law of a plan which has in God its ground and end. The wickedness of
a. Driver, Intro. to the Lit of OT, 398

free agents is comprehended in this plan, and made subordinate to it. God has not made wickedness as such, but to play a special part in His plan of the universe. His world order is supreme, and His wise and sure is His divine purpose, standing in contrast to the perplexity and obscurity of human plans. (XIX, 21) In spite of all human arrangements, victory in battle is decided by Him! (XXI, 31) Thus does everything subserve the universal and absolute plan of God.

(XXI, 1)

In His omnipotence, God controls human affairs. He guides the actions of man altogether according to His own wise judgment:

"To man belongs the plans of the mind,

But from YHWH comes the answer of the tongue." (XVI, 1)

The thought of the above quotation is also contained in verses XVI, 9, 33. Since human life is controlled by God (XX, 24), it is obvious that no man can comprehend fully his own experiences. The suggestion is that man must throw himself upon God, acknowledging and obeying Him, (III, 5) and then his life will be wisely directed. This reliance is to be reached by man's striving after wisdom, by moral enlightenment gained by all available means.

Omniscience. The discussion of God's omnipotence leads directly into the presentation of His omniscience. He is unexamined in His decrees, full of secrets. It belongs to the greatness of God that His work is mysterious and His purposes inscrutable. (XXV, 2) In the infinity of His creation, He perceives everything. (XXIV, 12) Nothing escapes His eye: (a)

The eyes of YHWH are in every place." (XV, 3a)

Again in V, 21, the sages insist that all of man's ways are under the scrutinizing gaze of the Most High. God's mental look penetrates to the depths of the soul. (XV, 11) He knows the motives that prompt man to act. Every action lies open before His sight.

a. Robertson Smith, Lectures on the Relig. of Semites 66.

Man has the power to take whatever course of action he wishes, but every one of his steps is a link of a chain, neither the beginning nor end of which he can see, while, on the other hand, God's knowledge comprehends the beginning, middle and end.^(a) While the judgement of man is according to outward acts, God examines the heart, (XVI,2) from which moral actions proceed. Human understanding grows pale in comparison to His knowledge:

There is no wisdom, nor understanding

Nor counsel against YHWH/ (XXI,30)

The authors of Proverbs subordinate everything to practical purposes, thus bringing their concept of divine omniscience, as has already been illustrated in the case of His omnipotence, into relations with the moral life of man. All the thoughts and impulses of the heart, God tests for their true worth. (XXIV,18) The judgment of man regarding the course of life which it is good to enter upon lies exposed to great and subtle self-deception (XVI,2);^(b) but God has the weight, i.e., the means of proving so as to value according to true moral worth. His investigation goes to the root, His decision rests on complete knowledge, it excludes all self-deception. Man can escape the danger of delusion, by no other means, than by putting his external and internal life to the all-penetrating test of the Searcher of hearts. God knows the right way to right ends. (III,5-8) He knows what benefits us. He is able to free us from that which is harmful and injurious. It is therefore our duty and to our safety to place our confidence wholly in Him, the omnipotent and omniscient, and lean not on our own understanding.

a. Delitzsch, Kommentary, 43. O. Zockler, Comm., 151.

b " " , 132, 321, 55

Holiness and Justice of God. The omnipotence and omniscience of God lead to the presentation of the deepest guiding motives in which the moral government of the world is rooted, i.e., the holiness and justice of God. The concept of the absolute loftiness of God necessarily includes His^e ethical suzerainty.

(a) For, it is impossible to conceive of a supreme being who searches out the heart for moral qualities and who at the same time possesses moral deficiencies. The sages believed in the prophetic idea of God as Moral Perfection. Theirs is a completely spiritualized God-conception. Man is not governed by the fear of mysterious forces hostile to Him, but, on the contrary, but by a holy and just God. They therefore advise men to trust in Him to the end that their purposes and efforts may succeed. (XVI,3) To trust the Holy One is to regard Him as the source of wisdom and purity, and obedience to His law secures prosperity. (IX,10) Knowledge of the divine will is necessary for leading a moral life. If, on the other hand, man should guide himself solely by human wisdom, he will be blinded by passion and at the mercy of temptation. Such self-sufficient wisdom leads to sin. (III,7) Sin may be avoided by the exercise of one's will. (I,10) Man's will should be exercised in the direction of God's law which is a fixed and holy rule of conduct, unaffected by the mutations and perversions of human passions.

God is holy, meaning that He is the highest rule of all morality. (b) Man, it is recognized is morally imperfect. (XX,9) The Holy One tries the heart of man. (XXI,2) and tests its moral worth. (XVII,3) Man is urged to strive after piety; the more pious he is, the more just he is. Wicked men cannot comprehend justice. (XXVIII,5) By pious men is meant those who seek the Lord!

a. Hudal, Relig. u. Sittliche Ideen d. Sprich., 33
b. Pfeiffer, Die Relig.-sittliche Weltanschauung d. B.d.S., I 49

As the perfect moral power, God's purpose is the fulfillment of the moral order everywhere. He bears antagonism to evil. (XV, 25)

" Evil devices are an abomination to YHWH." (XV, 26a)
 He hates those who nurse harm, (VI, 18), His curse is upon the wicked, (III, 33), ^{He} despises the bad man, (III, 32), He abominates those who are of a wicked mind, (XI, 20a), their life is abhorrent, (XV, 9), God's antipathy assumes a drastic form against those who ^{is} practise iniquity, (X, 29b). Just as strong as His hatred of the evil, so great is God's love of the good. He blesses those whose conduct is right, (II, 7, 8), He is friendly to the upright, (III, 32b), He protects the man of integrity, (X, 29a), such a man pleases Him, (XI, 20b), and is favored by Him, (XII, 2a). Thus, by showing good-will to those who pursue righteousness, and ill-will to those who wander from its way, He aims to realize the moral order. The holiness and justice of God is manifested by the operation of the principle of requital. The Eternal Requirer desires nothing more than the establishment of the perfect moral order, which is the object of His justice and holiness.

The sages believe that the holy and just God is the protector of the weak and the avenger of the oppressed. (XXII, 22, 23) Those who attempt to do the poor injustice are warned that God will conduct their cause, He will undertake their vindication and be their avenger. He is also the Redeemer of the orphan. (XXIII 10-II) If orphans have no ^{to} ~~to~~ redeem their inheritance, under the Hebrew law, they have a mighty Redemptor who will restore unto them what they have lost, (a)

In the presentation of the God idea in Proverbs, we observe the religious spirit which pervades the whole book. The a. Delitzsch, Komm., 100, III

holy and just God demand the pursuit of holiness and justice on the part of His creatures. This demand can be met by reliance on YHWH. (XXVII,25) God-dependence and God-fellowship will disentangle man's affairs, and provide him with that insight necessary to save him in time of an emergency. The fear of man, on the other hand, plunges one into misfortune. (XXIX,25) He who fails to stand in fellowship with YHWH is an object of divine wrath, and as such is destined to fall into a pit, yielding to seduction and ruin. (XXII,I4)

CHAPTER II

Practical Wisdom.

Next in importance to the God-idea in Proverbs is the Wisdom concept. This concept pervades the whole Book, coloring all its religious and moral ideas. The sages are intensely ~~ly~~ interested in it, because of its preeminent value:

"She (Wisdom) is a tree of life to those who grasp
her--

Happy are they who hold her fast." (III,18)

(cf. XVI,16 and III,13-17) The wisdom idea is therefore of great significance ~~for~~ the presentation of the religious views of Proverbs. (a)

Prior to the Wisdom Literature, ~~the~~ ~~old~~ ~~and~~ ~~new~~ bore meanings different from those which they represent here. Then they had no moral content. They stood for that practical skillfull-
applies
ness which the most suitable means for the achievement of the
ends
desired. They stood for shrewdness in discovery or device, cleverness or invention, to know the right course in judicial and political matters. (Gen. XLI,39; Ex. XXVIII,5; XXXI,3-6; 2Sa. XIV, 2ff; IK. III,16-28; XVI,14) (b)

What attitude does Proverbs take towards the Wisdom concept inherited from preceding literature? Does Proverbs contribute anything new to that concept? Is wisdom here simply practical wisdom; or is it that spiritual power which gives to the actions of men insight, contentment and consecration?

- a. Passages which prove the significance of Wis. are: I,20-23, II,1-5; III,1-21; IV,1-5,20; V,1; VII,4; VIII,1-21,32-36; IX,4; XIX,20; XXIII,12,15,19,23-26; XXIV,14; XXV,12; XXVII,11; I,8ff; III,35; XVI,23; XX,15; XXI,22; XXIV,5; XXIII,24b; XV,20; XXIX,3a; XIII,14; XVI,22; XV,24; XXVIII,26; XXI,16.
- b. K.Kohler, Jew. Enc., Wisdom, 537-538.

The authors of Proverbs use the term *ḥokmā* as moral insight necessary for wise conduct. Its synonyms are used similarly. All are to be understood as meaning that ripe religious insight that comes from experience. It is that intellectual activity that examines things critically and sees them in their proper moral perspective. The idea of Wisdom is parallel to the Old Testament idea of spirit---a life common to God and man, breathed into man by God and treated ordinarily in its human relations and activities. (a)

What is the principle of practical wisdom in Proverbs? What principle is the base and support of the Wisdom concept? The principle which holds together the various passages on Wisdom and enhances the religious tone of the book is the "Fear of God".

"The fear of YHWH is the beginning of knowledge." (I, 7a) Wisdom manifests itself in the fear of God. Wisdom has its aim and end in this fear. The quintessence and sum-total of wisdom is the fear of God. By fear is not meant intimidation or timidity; it is that open-eyed and reverential surrender to the absolute God, a surrender which leads to ethical attainments. This surrender is impossible where self-confidence prevails.

(b)
(III, 7) The holding of oneself as wise is represented as the contrast to or negation of the fear of God. (XIV, 26) Proverbs assume that to trust to one's own wisdom is to follow another law than that of God, i.e., the ordinary human standards of living and acting. He who lives in reverential acknowledgement of God will have within his soul a permanent and efficient moral

(c)
guide. Thus man's moral ideal is identified with the divine

a. Toy, Comm., Intro 16

b. Delitzsch, Comm., 333

c. Pfeiffer, Relig. etc., d. Sprüche, 106; Horton in Expos. B., 215

moral law.

Wisdom is the principle of practical moral action. It is universalistic in scope and application. Its source and absolute rule is YHWH. Through the fear of God, every man can attain to true wisdom. Thus Wisdom is accessible by all and obtainable by all.

There is, as we now see, a powerful relation, if not a complete identity, between the fear of God and Wisdom. Speaking on their own authority, the sages are convinced that Wisdom involves the recognition of God as "a fountain of life whereby one avoids the snares of death." (XIV,27) Wisdom is thoroughly possessed of a religious character. It starts with the recognition of God; it continues and develops with the moral insight and eminence gained by this recognition; There can be Wisdom, not true morality without religion. (a) The fear of God does not merely refer to a Being who is presupposed in any intelligent explanation of phenomena, but to Him who is the source of all goodness, the Omnipotent and Omniscient One, who is morally perfect. A true knowledge of Him can be only gained by "clean hands and a pure heart." Since God is the source of Wisdom (II,6), we can understand how He must also be the goal of every human search after it. (b) Man's conviction of a rational life is identified with the will of God. So intensely vivid is the value and consequence of Wisdom that the sages regard it as the final arbiter of man's destinies, as the insight that rules the world (VIII, 12-16) and is identical with God's moral law. (I,29,30) This claim is strengthened by II,6, where the religious nature of Wisdom stands in prominent relief.

The important place occupied by practical Wisdom is striking.

a. Wellhausen, Israel.u.jud. Geschichte, 220

b. Century Bible, 35

It rules and unites reason and will, intellectual ability and moral power. Its possessor obtains moral enlightenment which is expressed in upright conduct (II,9). He has wise understanding of a situation (II,II). In the warning against envying sinners (XXIII,17,18), we are told to fear God always. In this connection, Ebenezer says that the fear of God is the ~~is the~~ most worthy of all things to be coveted. As the principle of ethical purity it leads people away from the bad and guards them against sinning. From it comes counsel (VIII,14), and the love of truth (VIII,7). Wisdom is thus conceived of as practical morality. (a) It contains no element of philosophic speculation. Its starting point is not the question, "What is truth?" It is a creed, an axiom. Wisdom is to understand, so far as it is permitted to man's finite intelligence, the manifold adaptation and harmony of His works and ways, and to turn our knowledge of them to practical account. (b) Wisdom is in all the complex relations of human life and conduct to know and to do His will. It is conditioned by humility (XV,33). Scoffers cannot obtain it, (XIV,6) but only men of understanding (XIV,33). The moral law is a perfect expression of the truth, and obedience to it ensures a life free from external danger and harm. (I,33)

What is the way to attain Wisdom? It is the way of personal effort and work, (IV,5a) The sages nowhere make mention of a belief in innate wisdom, of a wisdom inborn in man. But, on the contrary, if man is to attain Wisdom he must strive after it. First, man must put himself in the proper attitude of the soul.

He must be serious in his undertaking. (XIV,6) He must recognize

a. J.F. Genung, Intern. Stand. BE., 2474; O. Zoeckler, Comm., 67.
b. Cambridge Bib., Intro., 10

that Wisdom has its beginning in that harmony of the human & spirit with the Divine, without which the soul is a chaos of conflicting emotions and impulses, without order and direction. (a) This principle once received into the mind and made its central law, all the human impulses move in harmony therewith and with each other. Man's spiritual nature and his relations to the spiritual world being thus recognized, his lower faculties and instincts become subservient to the higher ~~the higher~~ intellectual and spiritual development. The principle of Wisdom has a hold on the central springs of action. It ceases to be merely an outward restraint and becomes an inward law. Self-indulgence must, therefore cease. (XX,I; XXIII,29-35) If the right disposition ^{wisdom} is present, he who strives after it, with genuine longing, will attain it. The right ^{position} discipline is manifest when one subjects himself to moral discipline. (XV,31,32) The acquisition of moral knowledge brings with it, more and more, the recognition of Wisdom's words. (VIII,9) Wisdom demands the complete devotion of the heart. (XXII,17) If it is pursued with absolute earnestness, showing definiteness of purpose and concentration of powers (II,1-4), then it will become as food and as strong drink (IX,5). Its possessor will, as it were, enter upon a blessed life:

" Wisdom is a wellspring of life to its possessor." (XVI,22) ^a He will find that his efforts in the direction of bringing his life into harmony with the demands of Wisdom will not only prove beneficial, but also delightful. (II,10,11)

The sages recognize that true Wisdom can never be obtained by man, for it is beyond the reach of his unaided powers. This ^(b) thought should make its seeker humble and modest. ^{Such a one} ~~For he~~ is without self-sufficiency. He makes God's will his highest and ab-
 a. Conant, Bk. of Prov., Intro., VI.
 b. T.T. Perowne, Cambridge Bibel, II.

solutely binding rule. (III,7) In striving diligently after Wisdom , man will not fail to recognize that ~~it~~ is the gift of God. (II,4-6)

What are the effects of Wisdom? We have already touched upon this matter, We shall now take it up at some length.

The most pronounced effect of Wisdom upon the individual is the development of character. The search after Wisdom unites all the virtues in a harmonious way. It ^{for} ~~forms~~ the background and the foreground of man's moral actions. (III,5,6) The wise man rules completely overhimself:

"With all vigilance guard thy heart,

For thus wilt thou gain life." (IV,23)

He controls his passion. (XIV,27) The result is that he attains a calm and serene mental poise. (XVII,27) In other words, he is a man of self-control. This enables him to know the right and to do the right. A life governed by moral wisdom will be free of disturbing factors. Guided by Wisdom, the wise man is full of forbearance. He passes over transgressions. (XIX,II) He is not revengeful (XX,22)(XXIV,29) He overlooks injury and returns evil with good:

"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat,

If he be thirsty, give him water to drink;

For thou wilt heap coals of fire upon his head,

And YHWH will reward thee." (XXV, 21,22).

The motive which incites man to gain Wisdom is reward.

A wise man obtains favor from God and his fellow beings:

"Prize her and she will exalt thee,

h
Se will honor thee, if thou embrace her;

She will put upon thy head a chaplet of beauty,

Bestow on thee a crown of glory." (IV,8,9,)

The wise man enjoys ease; he is untroubled by the fear of danger, he is unsaddened by misfortune that may befall him;

" He who hearkens unto me will dwell securely,

Will be free from the fear of harm." (I,33)

Possessed of intellectual insight, he is superior to the man of physical strength. (XXIV,5,6) He conquers over the latter. (XXI,22) Such superiority brings honor and riches. (VIII,19-21) The wise man is rewarded with the good. (II,21) He enjoys God's protection, A protection that prolongs his life and enables him to realize many hopes. (X,27-29) He secures wealth and the esteem of men. (III,16) ~~Not least~~ ^{the} Not least among the blessings which the wise man receives, is the enjoyment of physical and spiritual health. (III,18)

"Then will there be health to thy body

And refreshment to thy bones. "

In the enjoyment of the protection of God, the wise man is fortified against the plots of the godless. For, God stands on the side of those who seek His knowledge and makes vain the words of the wicked. (XXII,12) Wisdom is the saving thing in life and rescues its lovers from the designs of the impious. (XI,9) ?

Wisdom has its consequences in the social life as well as in the individual life. (XXIII,24) Whereever justice reigns, Wisdom is at work. (VIII,15,16) Her power is evident in her ability to calm down the fury of kings. (XVI,14)

Because of its excellence, Proverbs compares Wisdom to the apple of the eye, (VII,2), a diadem, (IV,9), calls it a crown, (XIV,24), and a precious vessel, (XX,15).

The last good quality of Wisdom is that which unites all others. It is complete, undisturbed well-being. It is serenity of the mind. It is the poise of the soul:

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness,

And all her paths are peace." (III,17)

The highest worth of Wisdom lies in its ability to endow the soul with peace. The sinner may temporarily possess wealth. Peace is permanent wealth, which only the righteous may enjoy. Peace comes thro the fear of God.

It is now evident that practical Wisdom is of supreme value. Man should strive with might and main to attain it. For, we recall,

"She is a tree of life to those who grasp her---

Happy are they who hold her fast." (III,18)

We may conclude this discussion of practical Wisdom with mention of the fact that the sages exalt Wisdom into a hymn of god-like wisdom.^(a) Verse XXI.30 emphasizes the sovereignty of divine Wisdom over human wisdom.

The Logos idea.

We have thus far, in this chapter, dealt with practical Wisdom. We will now set forth the logos-idea, the objective Wisdom, contained in the passage, VIII,22-31.

In these verses, Wisdom is understood to have had a pre-mundane existence. It existed before the act of creation and was present at that divine act. This wisdom was not conceived of as God, but as God's. It was the world idea, which was once projected and which was therefore objective to God, not as a dead thing, but as something that lives and has a purpose. This wisdom was the archetype of the world, which having originated from God stood before God. It formed the medium between God
a. Franhenberg, Komm.33; Toy 70, *Comm.*

and the world of actual existence. It may be described as a child with whom the Maker of all things delighted to share his work. This wisdom ^{was} a demiurgos and is therefore to be understood altogether differently from that type of wisdom which is described as an attribute of God. (a)

This fragment (VIII, 22-31) is a bit of Oriental speculation. The logos-idea of neo-Platonic philosophy is similar to it, if not altogether identical with it. The conception of objective wisdom contained in this passage has germs which later ages seized upon and unfolded. It came to play a prominent part in theological history, especially in the history of Christian dogmatics. Jewish schools appeared to have laid no stress on the demiurgos function of religion as such. The idea was early employed in the controversies going on in the Christian Church respecting the nature of the second person of the Trinity. (b)

It is assumed by some scholars notably Toy (c) that this passage bears the impress of Hellenic thought. They say that the idea of objective wisdom is the result of Greek influence. As a matter of fact no such conclusion can be drawn. The idea of objective wisdom is oriental, (d), and existed at a time long in advance of the date when Greek influence could exercise itself upon Jewish ideas and thought.

The motive for introducing this lonesome passage into Proverbs is not altogether certain. It may have been the result of practical purposes. The compiler may have wished to show the high worth of wisdom in order to summon people to obtain it.

a. Cheyne, Jewish Relg. Life after Ex., 148; Delitzsch, Commentary

182; Century Bible, Intro., 22.

b. Toy, Commentary, 181, C. Siegfried, Dict. o t. Bib., Wis. 924.

c. " " 171

d. Jastrow, Civil, of Baby. and Assy. 442-483

Fools and Folly

Standing in strong contrast to "wise" and "wisdom" are the terms "fools" and "folly." They are opposite terms. The Proverbs repeatedly place them over against one another, and seems to divide all men into just two classes; the wise and the foolish, the good and the bad.

There is nothing new to learn about the concept of wisdom by entering upon the study of this topic. Its value, however, is that it brings out specific details in the characterization of wisdom.

How is the concept of fools to be understood in Proverbs? Do its authors simply wish to present two opposite ideas involved in morality and lack of morality? Are fools men who do not care for wisdom? Have these men speculative or practical disbelief in the value and need of living a life in the fear of God?

Proverbs contains many expressions for fool; *אִלּוּל*, *אִלּוּל*, *אִלּוּל*

אִלּוּל, *אִלּוּל*, *אִלּוּל*. They are all synonymous terms for the godless. They do not mean speculative disbelief in God. The Proverbs nowhere mentions any fact which lead us to take this view. These expressions for fool mean those whose life is ungodly, those who live contrary to the moral law. Their denial is not philosophical, not speculative, but is evident in the ungodly manner of their life. Fools count on the absence of God in the world; They do not care to recognize the operations of his moral laws in the world. Believing in the impunity of their conduct, they become corrupt, and do abominable deeds.

Fools are men who lack understanding. The term has a moral as well as a intellectual content. The delight which fools find

in pursuing the wrong is made possible by their intellectual and moral obtuseness;

"Folly is a joy to the man that lacks understanding,
But a man of understanding takes the right course."
(XV,21)

The fool does not understand the consequences of his actions; he has no moral basis for his life. He lacks moral insight. In other words, the sages believe that any man who is without moral knowledge is a fool.

It has already been mentioned that the Proverbs use various terms to describe the fool, the evil-doer. They do not represent gradations of evil, (a), as we will presently show. In XII,13, $\gamma\eta$ is a wicked man, i.e., one who is opposed to the good.

$\gamma'oo$ is a dullard, (X,23). he does not wish to leave off his wickedness, (XIII,19). He relies totally on himself, (I, 32). He is intractable, (XXVI,4,5,6). $\gamma'1X$ despises correction. Naturally, his own way appears correct, (XII,15) He is the opposite to a just man, (X,21). $\gamma\psi\gamma$ lacks uprightness, (I,20)

γ^b is a scoffer, not speculatively, but practically. (XV,12), (XIX,25; XXI,11; XXII,10; XV,12) He acts with a bold disregard

of the moral and religious law, (XXI,24). Punishment does not help him (IX,7-8). $\gamma'oo$ is recognized by his folly, (XIII,16) Such a man walks in darkness, (IV,13) All of the above expressions are synonymous for wicked men. They form a class of men who are despicable to the ^p upright and who, in their own way abhor the upright:

"The abomination of the righteous is the man of iniquity
a. Davidson, OT Theol. 209_{ts}.

The abomination of the wicked is the upright "
(XXIX,26)

We are now in a position to present clearly and definitely the concept of a fool in Proverbs. The fool loves moral ignorance and deliberately refuses to listen to instruction in right living. He is a stolid, dull person, one who is insensible to truth and acts without regard to it. (I,22-23) Wisdom is always of high value, although to the fool it appears all too costly, (XXIV,27). In this connection, Rashi comments that the fool despises wisdom because the expenditure of strength and sacrifice necessary to put one into possession of wisdom deter him from it. The fool takes pleasure in things that are bad. He shuts his eyes to the fact that they will bring punishment on him. The fool is a carefree and irresponsible person, (XIV,6)(a). He shuns the society of the wise and prefers the company where his frivolity will find approbation and response, (XV,12). People are warned not to have anything to do with fools, (XXVI,4-6; XXVI,8; XXIII, 17; XXIV,1-2) Association with fools is dangerous because they strive for the destruction of others, (XVI,27; 29; XVII,12) They lack pity (XII,10; XXI,10), and are cruel to the poor, (XXIX,7)/

On the other hand, the wise man possesses moral earnestness, (XIV,6), which, of course, the fool lacks. Right-doing is to the righteous a pleasure, (XXI,15); to the fool, injustice has become a pleasure and is second nature to him. The wise man needs no punishment, but only instruction which is a source of strength and encouragement to him in the pursuit of his high purposes and resolves, (XXI,11); the fool is punished for his wrong-doings, but is sometimes incorrigible.
a.Horton,Expositor's Bibel,341-2.

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Folly and Wisdom are opposed to one another. (IX,6) Folly is conceived of as the conscious and intentional departure from the right road. It is sensual enjoyment of that which is forbidden fruit. It is sin, generally pictured in the form of unchastity. (II,16-19; IV,2-6) It is loud, it sits in noisy places and calls to passers-by, promising them stolen pleasures, which, the sages add lead to death. (IX,13-18) Folly, like the unchaste woman whom she represents, is the symbol of unlawful and immoral pleasures. Folly and her guests are identified with the underworld. They are doomed and are already as good as dead. (IX,13-18) Folly, by reason of her temptations and her extensiveness, is the greatest foe to the doctrine of Wisdom. Wisdom is the preacher of virtue and righteousness. (I,20-23) Her appeal can be heard everywhere. It is extended to the dullards and the ignorant ones. If they continue to refuse to listen to her counsel, calamity will befall them. (VIII,6-9) She pleads with the simple ones to give heed to her advice. (VIII,4-5) Wisdom has a universal mission and is the sages's ideal scheme of life. She is to be sought by moral integrity. (VIII, 20) The man of Wisdom shows obedience to the moral law, while the man of folly sets God at naught. Wisdom summarizes her position by stating the general principle that ethical folly is self-destructive. In contrast to the false peace of the ignorant is the true peace which comes from the pursuit of Wisdom. (I,32,33) The way of Wisdom is the way to wealth and prosperity, (VIII,21) She guards against unchastity, (VII,5; VI,25,26). She brings genuine happiness, the happiness of the spirit, (III,13,14) (VIII,32-36)

In contrast to the blessing of Wisdom is the grief and prostration of folly. God's anger is upon the head of those who pursue evil. Their life is cut short. Their possessions will be taken away from them. Those who pursue folly have incurred the ill-will of the Lord, whose dis-favor will bring destruction and ruin upon them.

CHAPTER III

General moral Ideas

The book of Proverbs makes no distinction between religion and morality. Its ^{au}thors draw no lines of separation between the two such as exists in modern philosophy. For them, religion and morality are identical. In verse XIV,31, we observe a perfect identity between the two:

" He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker,
But he that is gracious to the poor honors Him."

The basis of morality in Proverbs is the common relation God has set up between Himself and all His creatures: (a)

" The eyes of the Lord are everywhere,
He sees the evil and the good. " (XV,3)

" Sheol and hell are penetrated by God,
How much the more the hearts of men." (XV,II)

This relation demands the recognition of God as the Omnipotent and Omniscient One by all men. They should recognize Him in all their mutual intercourse and dealings. God is the source of ethical authority. As such He charges His creatures to observe the moral law. He watches their conduct, and judges them according to the moral calibre of their actions. It is, therefore needful to look up to God as the moral guide in life and to trust to Him as the source of wisdom and power. It behooves man to stand in personal fellowship with God by means of upright conduct and faith.

a. Cheyne, Jewish Life after Ex. 140

The book of Proverbs assumes freedom of choice, (II, 9), but there is no inquiry into its relation to the absolute will of God. The sages believe that he who knows the good way will follow it. Right action is dependent upon right knowledge. Since man is a free agent, it follows that he is held responsible for his actions. ^(a) This principle of individual responsibility is involved everywhere in Proverbs; in verse XIX, 12, it stands out clearly and sharply.

"If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself,

And if thou art a scoffer, thou alone must bear. "

Everywhere the sages appeal to man to exercise carefulness of conduct. The reason cited for this exercise is the universal supervision of God:

" For the ways of man are before the eyes of YHWH,

And he weighs all his paths." (V, 21).

The fact that man can take no step in any direction should quicken his sense of moral responsibility, and incite him to gain a knowledge of the right so as to enable him to do the right.

Ritual. What relation, if any, does Proverbs bear to the ritual? What significance has it for the sages? What relation do they recognize as existing between upright conduct and ritualistic performances?

The sages attach little importance to the ritual. Temple and priests are nowhere mentioned. ^(b) Obviously, the temple cult is tacitly recognized, but it is not supposed to have a close connection with the moral life. Sacrifices and vows are noted a

a. Toy, Comm., 195

b. A.B.D., Enc. Bry., Prov., 873

number of times; these passages will be presently discussed. The keeping of the Mosaic prescriptions are far from standing in the foreground. In truth, indirect references are made in all parts to the Mosaic law. But the moral content of life is not based on ritual and ecclesiastical law. It is based on reason and counsel, which are the gifts of God. (II,5,6) The law of God is for the sages the moral law; their exhortation is not to bring sacrifices to the temple, but to listen to ^{Wisdom} ~~Wis~~ which is the voice of God. In other words, the external exercises in worship appear to have little significance, because the authors of Proverbs are mainly concerned with practical moral considerations. (XXVIII,4,7,9) Those are the aim and end of the whole work.

The term *דבר* occurs a number of times in Proverbs. When using this term, the authors do not refer to the Mosaic law. It is to be taken generally as meaning, instruction and teaching.

We should make clear that the legal terminology is not unknown to the sages. References to sacrifices, prayers and vows are found. In III,9, we note a reference to tithes:

"Honor the Lord with thy wealth

With the best of all thy revenue."

This is the only reference in *g* to the ceremonial law as compulsory. God would be honored by obedience to the commands respecting the care of the poor, (Dt. XIV,28,29) and the temple ministers (Nu. XVIII,12,13) In this connection, Toy says, "These were doubtless regarded as obligatory by all pious Israelites, though in Prov. they are elsewhere silently passed over as part

of the acknowledged routine of religious life, observance of which did not necessarily argue agenuine spirit of obedience to the moral law." (a) In VII,14, sacrifice is mentioned as a popular observance. The sages affirm that the sacrifice of the wicked is abominable:

" The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination of the
Lord,

But the prayer of the upright obtains His favor."(XV,8)
Verse XXI,27 declares that sacrifice without righteousness is displeasing to God, (cf, Amos V,21-24; Is.I,11-17; Hos.VI,6)
A bad man's offerings are abhorrent; they are despicable when given without repentance for the purpose of relieving one from the consequences of his evil actions. Because, the godless thereby attempt to make God a minister to crime. The Proverbs demand of him who would offer sacrifices an upright mental disposition:

" To do justice and equity

Is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." (XXI,3)
Sacrifices without righteousness are not mentioned in the book, perhaps because they were obviously proper and called for no remark.

Next to sacrifices, prayer receives ^{the} most frequent mention in connection with the ritual. Certainly the prayer of the morally good is acceptable, (XV,8b) Commenting on this verse, the Cheyne says, "This verse implies that prayer is the best part of sacrificial system and is acceptable even without sacrifice." (b)

at Toy, comm.,35

b. Cheyne, Relig. Life after Ex., 141

Certain it is that the sages believe that the prayer of the wicked is displeasing and futile. (XXVIII,9)

" He who refuses to heed instruction

His prayer is an abomination."

They nowhere hold that the godless may not pray, but they do insist that the prayers of the wicked are unfavorably received, while those of the righteous are regarded with favor and goodwill. (a)

"The Lord is far from the wicked

But he hears the prayer of the righteous." (XV,29)

Prophecy. All the struggles which convulsed and dominated the prophetic period are passed. Prophetic teachings (XXVIII, 4-9), as the individual sayings indicate, lie behind the book of Proverbs. The book itself takes its stand on the pure and lofty plane of the religious and moral ideas attained by the prophetic movement. It mints the good metal of prophecy into current coin. Having been written in the post-exile, a time when the prophetic teachings are raised above all doubt, Proverbs does not make the slightest attempt to prove their truth. It accepts them, It attempts seriously and deliberately to apply the results of prophetic teachings to life.

The influence of the prophets upon the sages is readily seen in the Proverbs.

a. The book contains the same estimate of sacrifice as is found in prophetic literature. The inferiority of the ceremonial system, from the viewpoint of the moral law, is evident.

It stands in contrast to moral integrity.

a. Cheyne, Job and Sol., 120

"By loving-kindness and truth, sin is expiated

And by the fear of the Lord, one escapes from

misfortune." (XVI,6)

The idea contained in the fore-going verse (also, XV,8; XXI, 3,27) is found in Amos V,18ff; Hos. VI,6ff. (a)

b. Proverbs and prophets are similar in their praise of humility, and warning against pride, arrogance and self-esteem. The proud man is, in both cases, he who sets himself presumptuously against YHWH and discountenances His divine law.

"The proud heart is an abomination of the Lord,

You may shake on it that it will not remain

unpunished." (XVI,5)

Humility is defined as the reverent obedience to God as the supreme and holy Ruler.

"The fear of the Lord is morals and wisdom,

And meekness comes before honor." (XV,33)

This command in which humility is identified, in a classical manner, with the fear of God forms for the authors of Proverbs the starting point of wisdom or upright conduct. (cf XI,2; XIII, 10; XIV,29; XV,10,4,18,25; VI,18,19; XVII,19; XVIII,12; XIX,11; XXII,4; and Is. II,11; Jer. XL,16; Am. VI,8; Hos. VII,11; Mic. VI,8)

c. Proverbs and prophets further agree in their denunciation of those who oppress the poor and their praise of those who care for the needy. (XIV,31; XVII,5; XXII,2; XXVIII,3,27; XXIX, 13; and Amos IV,1; V,11; VIII,4ff; Hos. V,10)

d. Finally, Proverbs and Prophets coincide in their conception of ethical monotheism. God is the foundation of all

a. Hesselgrave, Heb. Person. of Wisd. 9

morality and piety. His laws hold sway in the moral-order, which He has established. As children of the One God, all men are commanded to live by them. Violations thereof are sure to meet with punishment.

Proverbs fails to mention anything about such essential points of prophetic literature as the battle against idolatry, and the encroachments of strange cults, the reason being that these matters had already been settled and closed.

Sin. The problem of sin is not directly discussed in Proverbs. In treating of this subject, our starting point is that the book posits a distinction between good and bad, virtue and vice, upright behaviour and looseness of morals. What the composition of sin is, we will now explain.

Sin is a deviation from the right and straight path. (II, 15) Its way is perverted and crooked. (XXI, 8) Sin is the result of a lack of instruction and the absence of divine wisdom. (V, 23) It is sometimes the outcome of willful effort to make perverse one's ways. The warning therefore occurs that man should keep his feet from the ways of evil. (IV, 27) In verses IV, 18, and 19, we note a deeper comprehension of sin. Here, good and bad are opposites. The one is symbolized by light; the other by darkness. The light stands for wise insight; the darkness represents sin.

"The way of the wicked is like darkness--

They know not at what they stumble.

But the path of the righteous is like the light of the
dawn

Which shines ever brighter till the full day comes."

(IV, 18, 19) (a)

a. Transposition of the verses is after Toy, Comm. 93. The connection is clearer and the meaning is more evident.

Sin is spoken of as the work of folly or as bearing in it-
 character
 self the ~~work~~ of folly. (XXIV,9) It disturbs the relation of man
 to God and to his fellow-beings. Its innermost essence is laid
 bare when they refer to it as something that has caused the
 loss of God's favor. (XV,29)

The results of sin are much more widely discussed than the
 essence of sin. In the moral-world order, sin and punishment
 are inextricably bound up with one another. Every morally ob-
 jectionable act carries with it punishment. In XXIX,6, sin is a
 snare which doubtless leads to destruction.

"In the sin of a bad man is a snare,

But the righteous is joyful and glad." (a)

It may bring pleasure and satisfaction, but these benefits are
 momentary. (XX,I7) It inevitably results in restlessness. It
 produces the curse of an uneasy conscience. It suspects without
 cause; it accuses without reason.

"The wicked flee when there is no pursuer,

But the righteous are as bold as a lion." (XXVIII,I)

Another result of sin is found in sin itself. The sinner with
 brute-like stupidity goes to his fate. (VII,22) Sin blinds one's
 eyes, so that a man secure in his obstinacy does not foresee
 his misfortune. It winds itself around the sinner and plunges him
 to destruction. Wickedness is its own punishment. It is its own
 executioner. (I,19) It holds its victim fast. (V,22) Having
 fallen into a snare by virtue of his wickedness, the bad man
 aDelitzsch,466

cannot raise himself without the greatest difficulty (XXIV,16). His own eyes betray him. (XIII,6) While the sinner strives, in his greed, to satisfy his temporal wants, God disappoints his fondest hopes, (X,3), and thus the wealth and long life which sin promised becomes mere appearance. Bad men cannot gain what they wish.

"The hope of the righteous will have a glad issue,

But the expectation of the wicked will come to

naught." (X.28) (a)

Violence soon overtakes the sinner. (XIII,2) His treasures will be lost to him and become the inheritance of the righteous. (XIII, 22b) Poverty and disgrace will accompany the man of indecency and moral looseness. Stiff-necked persistence in sin will one day unexpectedly leave him a wreck. (XXIX,1) His end will come before his time. (X,27) Doom awaits him and his house.

"The house of the wicked will be destroyed,

But the tent of the upright will flourish." (XIV,II)

His memory will be extinguished on earth. (X,7b) He passes his time in Sheol. (II,18; V,5; VII,27; XXI,16)

Means of expiating sin. The sages have not closed the doors of expiation to the sinner. He who truly desires to make atonement will always find the means available. Two things are necessary for atonement. First, the sinner must be deeply penitent. He must make acknowledgement of his sins. Confession is an indispensable accompaniment of repentance. (XV,13) Second, forgiveness is made to depend not on sacrifice, nor on confession, but on ethical conduct. The sinner must give inward and outward evidence of the sincerity of his confession. Atonement is made a. Delitzsch, Comm., 174.

by loving-kindness and truth. (XVI,6) By such genuine expiation, the divine anger against the sinner is turned away, and man's relation to God is as though he had not sinned. Thus we observe that the moral laws which God has set up in the world-order visits severe punishment upon the sinner in the hope of serving as a means of keeping him in the straight path. If, however, he has deviated from the road, he may return to it by making proper atonement. The moral-order works to the benefit of the sinner.

Retribution. For the sages, religion was interpreted in the prophetic sense of individual piety. This interpretation overthrows the belief in collective responsibility and carries with it the idea of individual retribution. (a) This latter idea is greatly emphasized in Proverbs, especially in a. This especial emphasis can probably be accounted for by the fact that its author seems to stand in the closest relation to the prophetic movement.

The sages take for granted the doctrine of individual responsibility, i.e., the representation of God as acting towards men as they act towards him. Virtue is rewarded; vice is punished. Virtue and vice are fully recompensed in this life by the judgment of God, with or without human instrumentality. (XII, 1; XIII, 21) The view of the moral government of the world makes the punishment of the bad man indispensable. (XVI, 4) The sages insist that virtue never goes unrewarded. (III, 8-10; 16; X, 25; 27; XVI, 20) Piety is therefore the most successful and advantageous course to follow. (II, 7ff; IIff; 20-22) While misfortune is sure to befall the ungodly, (XI, 31); for the pious, it is only a

a. Battenwieser, The Prophets of Is., 322

passing chastisement. (III.II)

The sages are convinced that the just God is the protecting wall of the righteous. He is necessarily hostile to evil-doers. Verses, VI, 12-15 present the picture of God as the Requiter. The certainty of requital is the ground of avoiding the ways of those who have incurred the enmity of God, (III, 32-34), and of striving to enter, by upright conduct, into friendly relations with Him. (a)

Obedience to the moral law secures for man a thoroughly healthy and happy condition of being. This condition is resolved primarily into freedom from bodily and other outward ills (III, 8a), but necessarily involves peace, (III, 8b). Moral goodness brings prosperity; ill-gotten wealth, perversity. Wickedness does not profit in the long run, since the practise of injustice surely brings divine or human vengeance on man's head. (X, 2) The righteous always stand in favor with God; their temporal wants are provided for by Him. (X, 3a) They who seek kindness and justice will find more than they sought. (b) (XXI, 21) While the wicked are certain to fall; the righteous are established forever. (X, 25; 27) In short, with the independent action of man accords the attitude of God---to those who choose aright, He manifests good-will, favor and friendship---to those who follow the ways of evil, He shows malevolence and enmity. (III, 32-35) Here the relation of God to human conduct is described as a judge-- He is not said to inspire or guide, but to bestow reward or punishment according to the moral value of one's conduct.

The ~~XX~~

a. Nowack, DB., 924

b. Cambridge Bib., 139

The problem of suffering. The problem of suffering is only slightly touched upon in Proverbs. The view is that suffering is always the punishment of sin. In XI,8, it is recognized that the righteous are sometimes afflicted, but the affliction is temporary (as in Job XX,5) and the wicked is soon cast down from his short-lived triumph to take his proper place as the sufferer. (The case of the good man suffering and the bad man prospering throughout life is not considered in Prov.) A happy issue which indemnifies for past sufferings, the wicked man will not enjoy; his light burns brightly for a time, but one day it will be extinguished. (XXIV,19,20) In III,12, the beautiful thought occurs that the suffering of the good man is to be regarded as a divine chastening dictated by love.

But whatever be his lot, man is admonished to keep his faith in YHWH and to accept willingly His reproof as a part of the moral world-order. (III,11) As God should not be forgotten in the days of prosperity, so He should not be estranged in days of adversity. In the fullness of time, requital will come. In the meanwhile, sinners will perish, and the upright, buoyed up by confidence in His wisdom and justice, will endure and triumph. (XXIX, 25; III,5) ¹⁰³
 a. Hudal, Relig.u.Sit.Id.d.Spruchb., 196

CHAPTER IV

Cardinal Virtues of the Individual

Proverbs is a book of rules applicable to the different situations in life. It is a record of maxims serviceable at all times and places. (a) It is a guide to a comfortable and happy life.

Can the various moral demands of the book be grouped under the head of a single virtue? Is it possible that the sages conceived of a virtue which rules all other virtues? Is there a virtue of virtues?

It might hastily be supposed that practical Wisdom is the king, whose dominion and power extends over all the other virtues. True it is that Wisdom is a term often used to describe him who carries out all the moral demands made in Prov. Yet Wisdom cannot be taken as the alpha and omega of the cardinal virtues of the individual. Wisdom is not their starting point, their root. It is the result of the fear of God. (XV, 33a) Again, the motive of reward has been suggested as the principle of moral actions. But this reward can only be conceived of as proceeding from God as the fruit of a God-fearing life. Both Wisdom and reward go back to the deepest rule of moral action, 99 5X79 This is the seed which blossoms forth into wise conduct, which is rewarded with all that is good in life. (b)

The fear of God. The fear of God is the starting point of (c) Wisdom. It is the motivating power of ethical conduct. In this fundamental principle of the moral order, God, as has already been

a. Davidson, E. Br. 19, 879.

b. Conant, Prov., Intro., VI.

c. Toy, Ency. Bib., Ency. Bib., Prov., 3916.

shown, occupies the central place. The content of moral enlightenment is summarized in the famous principle of the fear of God found in verse I,7. The final motives of moral action are concentrated in it. From it, there proceeds that inner confidence in YHWH from which all success flows. (XVI,20) It brings about humility, which is another way of saying reliance upon God. (XV, 33; XXII,4) Born of this humble attitude is a friendship between God and man. (III,32) This friendship brings God's favor upon him, (XVI,3), guides him in all his steps, (XVI,9), The God-fearing man thereby obtains the blessings of his devotion .(a)

Sagacity. In one of the opening verses of Proverbs, the sages announce as their purpose the desire to teach the simple דבדל. (I,4) This word has been interpreted, apart from its context, as meaning sheer worldly prudence, i.e., a kind of cunningness which is without moral scruples. and which is often actuated by base motives. As a matter of fact the moral character of sagacity is represented by the fear of God which is the fountain of all moral actions. We can therefore define sagacity as that mental characteristic which guards its own advantage with calculating thoughtfulness and with all morally permissible means.

Sagacity is a prominent feature of the wise man. In conversation, he shows reserve and foresight which results from exercising control over his affections. (XVI,13-14; XIV,29; XXI,23) Conscious of the great danger of excessive talking, he guards his lips, and is especially watchful at the right time. (X,19; XIII,3) He does not talk about everything he knows. (XII,23) Not only does he weigh his words carefully, but his manner of
a. O. Zockler, Comm., 67

Speech is pleasing and persuasive. (XVI,23) As a result of the wise reserve that characterizes all his actions, he is ever prudent. In his conduct towards others, he sometimes employs gifts,, not in the sense of bribery, but to ~~help~~ make his way easy. (XVIII 16; XXI,14) The sages do not countenance bribery, and issue a warning that gifts accepted in its spirit bring ruin upon a man. (XV,27)

The wise man is cautioned repeatedly against going bail and acting as surety for another. This prescription is not religious. It is not admirable. It sounds harsh. The reason for this warning may be found in the thought that too often the man that goes bail for another suffers punishment for his act of generosity. (XII, 26, 27; VI,1-5)

Justice. Justice is an essential element in the ^{character} ~~character~~ of the wise man. By justice is meant that quality that gives to every man his due. It avoids anything that might violate the rights of others. It takes no advantage of anyone.

The wise man recognizes in God the source of all justice, and therefore, in fearing God, he pursues justice. He is active against wrong-doers, (XXVIII,4), who rob YHWH of the honor which He deserves. In his commercial transactions with others, he steers clear of deceitful weights and false measures out of the fear of committing a crime against MHHW's just world order. (XI,1) (XX,10) He refrains from encroaching upon the possessions of his neighbor; he limits the borders of his own fields. (XIII,28) He practices no ^o violence against a person, (I,II); he is especially cautious about assailing good men who do no wrong to anyone. (XXIV, 15,16) The wise man is anxious about the rights of the poor.

He finds great joy in seeing justice done on all sides:

"The execution of justice is a joy to the righteous,
But destruction to evil-doers." (XXI,15)

He knows that the practice of unfairness and ~~im~~partiality is a curse, whereas the pursuit of impartiality is a blessing, (XXIV, 24,25)

To be just means to be truthful and truth-loving. The just man hates deception of any kind. (XIII,5) He recognizes that the deceiver succeeds only in appearance; in reality, he fails. In looking up to God as the unconditioned standard of truth, (XII, 22), the wise man avoids false testimony and lying lips. (XIX, 9; XXV,18) He shuns hypocritical conduct of any kind, (XVI,18-28).

Moderation, Moderation is the keynote of proverbial ethics. It is the outward expression of inward control. This control is indispensable for right living; its absence is fatal to the individual; (a)

"A city broken through, without a wall,

Such is a man to whose spirit there is no restraint."
(XXV,28)

All men are warned to exercise self-control, particularly does this warning apply to those who are hot-tempered and excitable, (XXIX,II; XIV,29; XV,I)

The sages see no advantage in the possession of riches, but many advantages in the possession of wealth. They therefore caution man to pursue wealth rather than riches. They believe that the man of riches is apt to forget that ^aall comes from God, (XXX,9) Moreover, wealth ~~is~~ bestowed by God, is distinguished from that ill-gotten gain which brings evil with it. (X,22) This idea of wealth
a. Zoeckler, Comm., 65.

which the sages teach necessitates the exercise of self-control on the part of those who seek gain. It holds before individuals the thought of moderation and disparages excess. The wise man heeds the warnings against making the possession of wealth a passion. (XV,27a; XX,21; XXVIII,20; 22; XIII,11) He prefers to live according to the highest economic ideal, i.e., the golden means between poverty and riches. (XXX,7-9) More valuable, still, than the acquisition of material wealth is that of spiritual wealth.

(XI,4; X,22; XV,6; XVI,8; XIX,1)

The aim of the truly wise man is at the needful temperance and prudent repression in his physical and mental regimen. No ² greed characterizes. (XXVIII,22) His efforts to achieve honor, (XXV,6-7), enjoyments, (XXIII,30; XXV,16) and fortune are attended with self-restraint. Through dominion over his passions, the wise man obtains gentleness of spirit as the best and surest means to win real power and greatness. (XVI,32) He promotes his inward and outward well-being to the highest possible degree. His practice of self-discipline leads to the enjoyment of tranquillity of heart and peace of soul. (XV,16) He who has gained true mastery over himself also attains outward prosperity and security. (III,2b) God smooths his paths, (III,6), fills his garner and cellars with abundance, (III,10), makes him great through riches and honor, (III,16), and guides him through his whole life in the ways of peace and delight. (III,17) A thing that rises far above all these blessings above gold, silver, and all the treasures of the earth, (III,14, 15), is the gracious favor with which the wise man finds not only with men but also, to a greater extent, with God. (III,4)

Benevolence. The last of the cardinal virtues is benevolence. The wise man manifests his wisdom in the benevolent attitude which he bears towards all, particularly towards his enemies. Love is at the bottom of the admonitions of the sages, the love which God extends to the righteous among men:

"The way of the wicked is an abomination to YHWH,
^t
 But him who pursues righteousness He loves." (XV,9)

The wise man is urged to manifest love towards others, a love which hides transgressions, not by condoning them, but by making allowance and forgiving. (X,12) This love leads man to cover up the faults of others.

The benevolent man recognizes the duty and blessing of charity. The needy person is not regarded merely as an object of passing sympathy. He is respected as a creature of divine wisdom. (XIV, 31) The extension of kindness to the distressed is looked upon as done to God, who will abundantly reward the giver. (XIX,17) He who gives to the poor will have no want, for God's blessing will reimburse him liberally for his consideration for others. The contrary is equally true. He who veils his eyes so as not to see the misery which has a claim on his compassion will be rich in curses, which, because they are deserved, will change his lot, by virtue of divine requital, into all kinds of misfortune. (XVIII, 27) The cold-hearted and thoughtless neighbor sins against God. (XIV,21) In a word, all men are urged to deal kindly and benevolently with one another so as to obtain God's favor. (a)

The benignity of the wise man should be liberally outstretched to the needy enemy; first, because his injustice is thereby
 and Delitzsch, Comm., 145, 54, 47, 168, 222; Toy, Comm., 206, 454, 392, 468

brought home to the latter, and, secondly, because God is well-pleased with such practical manifestations of love and will reward its author. (XXV, 21) The wise man cannot rejoice over the misfortune that befalls his enemy. (XXIV, 17, 18) He withholds himself from acting as a witness against a neighbor without adequate cause. (XXIV, 28) Revenge is at all times distasteful to him. (XXIV 29) He knows that punishment follows the returning of evil for good: (a)

"He who returns evil for good,

Evil will not depart from his house." (XVII, 13)

The wise man consequently commits all to God, who will deliver His servants from the machinations and injuries of his enemies. God is thus represented not as desirous of revenge, but as long-wise ing to help and save. Finally, the man recognizes that it is far better that some one courageously and sternly correct him on account of his faults than it is to be the object of a love which may indeed exist in the heart but which fails to make itself evident in the outward act. (XXVII, 5)

The practice of the cardinal virtues, sagacity, justice, moderation, and benevolence makes for genuine happiness. It is the happiness which can only come to the morally upright. It is the happiness which cannot be exclusively characterized by external things, but by that state of the heart which is joyously confident in God.

"The days of the afflicted are wretched,

But a cheerful heart has continual feasting." (XV, 15)

a. Horton, Expositor's Bibel, 314.

CHAPTER V

Social Ethics.

It has already been made clear that many commands in Prov. are social in the sense that they have the well-being of one's neighbor at heart. These have been treated in the preceding chapter. Their treatment has gone far to refute the contention that the basis of the ethics of Prov. is absolute individualism. In addition to those ^{verbs} Prov., there are a goodly number of others which have regard for communal living in the family and state. This latter group is of such import and consequence as to require a separate chapter for the consideration of Social Ethics in the book of Proverbs.

The Family. The sages have an understanding and appreciation of family life which is born of high moral culture. They insist upon family purity. All forms of sexual immorality are vehemently condemned. (V, 15-20; XXII, 14; XXIII, 27ff; XXIX, 3b; II, 18ff; XXXI, 3; VII, 24ff; VI, 24ff) ~~Man~~gamy is presupposed, and marriage is to be enjoyed in a manner which stands in contrast to the pleasure of illicit love. The marriage bonds are to be held sacred and inviolable.

The family life is mainly characterized through the position assigned to the woman as the wife and mother: (a)

"A house and wealth are an inheritance from fathers,

But a wise wife is the gift of God." (XIX, 14) cf. XVIII, 22)

A good wife is of inestimable value. (XII, 4) She is a power in the
 aa. Pfeiffer, Relig. sitt. W. d. Bu. d. Spruche. 135; Bennett and Adeney,
 Bib. Intr., 159.

home capable of making it a place of misery or joy. (XIX,13)

She is a constructive force in the household. (XIV,1) The good wife keeps the bonds of faithfulness which she has made. (II,17)

Her demeanor is quiet and characterized by reserve. (XXVII,15)

Quarrel and strife through which the family life sometimes becomes unbearable is strange to her. (XXI,9; XXI,19) (a)

The ideal wife is pictured in verses XXXI,10-31. Such a one is not often found, but when she is found she is of incomparable worth. (XXXI,10) The ideal wife deserves and maintains the respect and trust of her husband. (XXXI,11-12) Her orders to her servants are definite and are couched in mild terms. She is a tireless worker in her household. (XXXI, 13-15) Her interests are not confined solely to the administration of her home; she is also interested in increasing her possessions. (XXXI,16-17) Her labors are so intensive that oftentimes she forgets her nightly rest, (XXXI,18), in order that her family may want for nothing in the future. (XXXI,21-22) She is benevolent of heart, freely distributing alms to the poor and needy. (XXXI,20) Her household is so well established that she is without fear and anxiety for its future safety. (XXXI,25) Her merits are recognized by her family. She therefore enjoys its respect and praise. (XXXI,28,29) This cannot be otherwise. For, she is kind and prudent, attentive and industrious. (XXXI,26,27) The ideal wife is a fit mate for her husband, who sits distinguished in the public service. (XXXI,23) Over and above her excellencies of administrative ability and kindly character stands the chief of all her virtues, the fear of God, by which she lives and labors. (XXXI,30) This virtue is the source of her supreme value and attainments.

a. Kent, Social Teachings of Prop., 142

The picture of the wise husband parallels that of the wife.
 (XXXI,23)
 He is a proper and becoming mate for her. The bringing up of their children is a task which both of them equally share. Again, he recognizes his parental responsibility of leaving an inheritance to his children. (XIII,22) To the value of bequeathing wealth, the sages were not blind, but they recognized that there were still more valuable goods to be bequeathed. (XVII,6b)

"A man of probity and righteousness--

Happy are his children after him." (X,7) (a)

Children. The rearing of children assumes an important position in Prov. The importance which the sages attach to it can be realized by the large number of pedagogical rules which they set forth dealing with this subject. In the task of raising children, the father and mother must cooperate. (I,8) The family is looked upon as a social unit, and in it, parents and children should give dignity and happiness each to the other. (XVII,6) Parents are presented as models to the children, because having reached middle life, they have attained to maturity and wisdom through experience. The parents should guide themselves, in bringing up their children by the fundamental principle of education; namely, to train the child in his early years so as to enable him to achieve a complete and efficient manhood.

"Train up a child in the way he should go,

Then when he is old he will not depart from it."
 (XXII,6)

The conviction of the sages is that the character and disposition of a child can be moulded under proper influence and with the exercise of adequate authority. The purpose of education is
 a. Toy, Comm., 385

to help the child become a God-fearing man. (I,7,8) His education, having begun early in life, should be constant and lead to a continual correction of mistakes. (XXIII,13-14) In the case that the child is at fault and refuses to apply himself to instruction, stern measures should be taken in order to compel him to fall in line. (XXII,15; XIII,24; XIX,8) The sages unhesitatingly recommend strict discipline in education. Because they believe that ill-conduct brings an early death to those who pursue the ways of evil, they would save the child from this fate by the necessary instruction and exercise of adequate authority. Corporal punishment should be used in the hope of gaining improvement in conduct. (XXI, 15,17) Parental love which is strong and unselfish finds expression, if need be, in effective discipline and control of children.

The whole educational training of the child has a religious basis. This can be seen from the purpose and goal of education; namely, to help the child gain wisdom. Wisdom is the life of a person. On this account, the child is warned to hold fast to it. (IV, 13) A wise heart is one that recognizes truth and righteousness as the source of successful development of character. (IV,23) This thought unquestionably presents the most profound, comprehensive, and controlling truth that the father in the course of his counsels and warnings can give his son.

The sages constantly remind children of the obligations which they owe to their parents. (a) One of the most difficult lessons that the youth has to learn is to receive parental discipline appreciatively. (XIII,1; XXIII, 22) Parental instruction is commended highly, and children are therefore urged to heed the advice of their parents. (VI,20-23) They are also informed to esteem their
a. Hudal, Rel.u.Sit.Ideen d.Spruchb.,202

parents highly, (I,8; XI,20), and to show, by their wise conduct, love and obedience for them. (I,3) A test of filial loyalty was the consideration and respect accorded the mother. (XV,20) Children are admonished to be obedient; else they will die violent deaths, their bodies will lie unburied and be food for birds. (XXXI,7) If they fail to show respect for the property of their parents, they will be classed with the "Destroyer." (XXVIII,24)

The consequence of giving adequate care to a child's education and welfare is that God and men will be fond of them. When they boy grows up, he will make a glad father. (X,I) Parents will find joy and honor in well-brought up children. (XXIII,15,16,24,25; XXVII,11) The opposite is also true. Children who have grown up morally stupid will always be a source of sorrow and grief to their parents. (XVII,21;25) Such children are the ruin of their father, (XIX,13a); they maltreat their parents, (XIX,26); despising their instruction, (XV,5), and scorning their person. (XV,20) In the final analysis, children are known and valued according to the character of their conduct. (XX,11)

"Even a child makes himself known by his deeds,

According as his conduct is good or bad." (a)

Life in the state. The sages held very high ideas of state government and activity. Their maxims contained fine ideals of righteousness and integrity by which rulers should guide themselves, such as would insure the well-being of the state and the rights of its individual subjects. (XVI,12) Kings were regarded as a necessary and universal element of society to be feared and obeyed. (b) (XVI,10-15; XX,26,28; XXIV,21; XXV,2,7) The perpetual duration of their dynasty is made to depend neither on physical nor intellectual superiority, but upon spiritual excellence. (XXIX,14
a. After Toy, Comm., 387
b. Widdboer, Comm., 70

By virtue of the eminent position occupied by the king, especial prescriptions are given regarding the manner in which he should conduct himself towards the people. The character of the ideal king, as presented in XXXI,1-10, should be above reproach and shame. Chastity and sobriety should be counted among his personal virtues. (XXXI,2-7) He loves the pure of heart. (XXII,II)

In the administration of his duties, justice should be his dominant motive. He should manifest justice towards all alike. His greatness of character should be shown to all, particularly to the widows and orphans, the poor and the needy. (XXIX,14; XXXI,6-9) He disposes of the wicked. (XXI,26) He knows that kindness and truth guard his throne. (XX,28) (a)

As has already been intimated, the sages place the greatest emphasis upon justice as the keynote of the successful reign of a king. This emphasis is necessary because the king wields absolute power, and, therefore, he needs to take particular care in the exercise of his power and prerogatives. The strength of his throne is founded upon the rock of righteousness. (XVI,12; XXV,5; XXIX,14) It is abhorrent to him to commit mediate or immediately wickedness. In order to carry out this program of justice, it is necessary that the king keep his person far removed from flattery and lying men, and allow only the righteous and truth-loving in his vicinity. (XXII,II) With such upright men, he should take counsel. ((XI,14; XV,22; XXI,6) For, they are the real support of his kingdom. (XXV,5; XXIX,12)

In spite of the strict adherence to justice with which the king triumphs over the bad, (XX,26), he should be guided at times a. Delitzsch, Comm., 342; Toy, Comm., 323

by softer considerations. Pity and sympathy must not be lacking in him. (XX,28)

All the virtues of the king should be outshone by wisdom, which has a higher value than earthly power and greatness. (XXI, 22; XXIV,5) The fear of God constitutes the foundation of the virtues of chastity, sobriety, righteousness, and compassion about which the mother cautions her royal son. (XXXI,2-9)^(a) Under the inspiration of wisdom, the king will consider well all his plans. (XXV,2) He will search out a matter, i.e., in conformity with the demands of his responsible position, he will strive, with conscientious zeal, to place in the light the things that are problematical and subject to controversy. Guided by wisdom, he will direct the state with success. (XXIV,6) He will help the kingdom to attain a solid position and an enduring prosperity through the exercise of right in appointing an equitable measure of taxation. (XXIX,4) Thus does the righteous king cause rejoicing among his people. (XXVIII,15)

A king, such as is described above, is the good fortune of his people. His kingdom will grow and expand in power and wealth. The number of his subjects will increase. On the other hand, when a sinful ruler occupies the throne, a dismal picture is presented. If he be intemperate, the rights of the suffering are disregarded. (XXXI,4-5) Covetous of gifts, he brings the land to ruin by his exacting contributions. (XXIX,4)^(b) A wicked ruler leads the country to social corruption. The people are robbed and the kingdom is broken by misfortune and calamity. (XXVIII,12) A rapid succession of rulers is bound to take place. Verily a bad king is a "roaring lion and a raging bear." (XXVIII,15) His people are saddened and

a. Lange's Comm., Prov., 259
b. Ency. Bib., Prov., 3915

despondent.

In their attitude towards the constituted authorities , the people should be obedient and loyal. (XXIV,21,22) Allegiance to God as the supreme religious authority, and to the king as the supreme civil authority is enjoined; opposition to them will bring destruction upon the people. (a)

It should be borne in mind that however powerful the king may be, he is in the hands of the Almighty, who can direct his actions whithersoever He wills. (XXI,I) The God-fearing king, therefore, transgresses not, loves the good and the right. Those who find favor with him are fortunate. (XVI,10-15)

Slaves and servants. The sages never tire of championing the cause of the weak. The servant or slave^a was regarded as a member of the family to be treated with kindness and respect. The attention accorded slaves should be guided by humaneness and prudent consideration. (XX,10) As was the case with one's own children, when words fail to call forth the proper obedience, on the part of servants, severe measures are recommended. (XXIX,14) The sages believe that, in a certain sense, a man is born to his position. It is unnatural, consequently, for slaves to gain the dominant influence over princes or to obtain the ruling power. Such an event contradicts the social order. (XIX,10; XXX,22) (b)

Faithful servants deserve the highest and most practical honors that the family, to which he is loyal, can confer. (XVII,2) If it comprises degenerate sons, he may rise to a position of trust in it, such that he may divide the estate among the children and receive a part of the inheritance as his share.

- a. Kent, Social Teach. of the Proph., 147-148
- b. Strack, 64, Comm.

CHAPTER VI

The Sages Conclusion.

How can we understand the term *חכמים* Was it an organized group of moral teachers? Or, was it a name given to a class of men whose moral ideal *חכמה* forms?

The term *חכמים* occurs in a number of places in the book of Proverbs. The teaching of those whom this term represents is highly praised. It is a fountain of life. (XIII,14) Association with the sages is highly recommended. (XV,31) Their intercourse must be gracious in order to meet with success. (XVI,21) Foolish men, of course, being void of understanding and appreciation, steer clear of their words. (XV,2.7) The warnings of the wise are mentioned in verse XXV,12/ The capacity to soothe anger is ascribed to them in XXIX,8.

No conclusion can be drawn from the above citations as to (a) the existence of a definitely organized guild of men. At most, the references suggest the presence of a tolerably prominent class of men possessed of a practical moral philosophy and deeply interested in its propaganda. They formed no hereditary caste like the priests. They heard no distinct call like the prophets. They made up a group whose regard for the welfare of the state and particularly, for the moral integrity of its subjects motivated them to gain the ear of the young with a view of instructing them in the principles of right conduct.

The sages were men of deep moral insight, men of experience and wisdom. (XXII,17; 1,2-6; II,1-3) They brought their moral philosophy. a. Toy, Comm., 270, 33

osophy to bear on all sides of life, striking root not only at external conduct, but also at the disposition of the mind. They had no quarrel with political institutions nor with religious forms. They accepted the political and religious status quo. Their interests were not the distinctively national elements of Israel's character or faith. We can therefore understand the absence of warnings in the Prov. against idolatry and the lack of the favorite national ideas and phraseology of the Prophets. (ex., Israel, Zion, my people)

The sages expressed no distinction of race or country. If enactments of the Law are repeated in Prov., they are universally applicable. The wise men took for granted the main postulates of Israel's creed. They strove to make this creed practical. On the basis of the observation of human nature, they sought to establish a morality common to the entire circle of humanity. Whether this last was purposeful is not certain. But the fruit of their observations and historical studies, the book of Prov. is good for all men, of all racial and religious connections.

Delitzsch calls the sages the humanists of Israel. (a) These humanists speak in their own name, (III, I), without reference to divine inspiration or to any book or code as their authority. The *halakha* which they mention is the law of their own conscience and reason. Their silence in regard to the literary productions of the prophets and priests is doubtless due to the nature of their material. The humanists do not sever all ties with the past. But they do regard themselves as independent expounders of the moral laws, having comprehended their nature and effects. They are not

a. Delitzsch, Comm., 34

concerned with the religious relations and obligations of Israel as such, but only with those which pertain to him as a man, living under the rule of a perfectly righteous Governor of the universe. (a)

The sages held before their mind's eye a practical moral aim. It was two-fold. First, it consisted in the formulation of maxims of conduct. Secondly, it included their service as teachers and directors. They were at once authors and teachers. Their object was to inculcate in their pupils whole-hearted confidence in God to the end that those instructed would always act according to His divine will. (XXII, 17-21) In this task, the sages worked individually.

The tendency of the sages was to adapt prophetic morality to the every-day demands of human life. The whole range of human conduct, as has already been suggested, falls within the purview of their wisdom. Their precepts follow man into all the relations of his common life. Wisdom is the friend and counsellor of the monarch on the throne, of the artisan at his work, of the husbandman in the field. Trade and commerce fall within its sphere. The sages bring all the affairs of human life in touch with their moral philosophy. (b)

While the sages were primarily interested in individuals, they recognized that no individual could attain to true happiness and well-being unless he learned to do his part as a member of society. They knew that well-fare of an individual is to a great extent dependent upon society. Hence, they sought to create a righteous social order, and, in so doing, to conserve the best

- a. Ency. Brit., Prov. 3917-19
- b. Cheyne, Job and Sol., 118

interests of the individual. They endeavored to solve the problems of society by rearing righteous-minded individuals. They knew that, in the ultimate analysis, the interests of society and of the individual are identical. In common with their fore-runners, the prophets, they sought to inculcate in men a moral attitude, rather than to lay down dove-tailed laws or to establish fixed institutions. They endeavored to train and develop the moral and social consciousness of the individual. (a)

The view is repeatedly expressed that the sages urge as the only motive for righteous living the earthly well-being which attends it. Some critics see in the Prov. the coarsest materialistic utilitarianism. True it is that the promise of reward (IV, 22, 23; IX, 11), in the forms of riches, honor, and long life is reiterated continually in the Prov. This is a sort of eudaemonism, the critics say, in which the individual actor alone is considered and the reward of his virtue is evident materially. This strictly utilitarian representation is a distortion of the truth. The sages did believe strongly in earthly retribution. They did hold that life, prosperity and honor were preferable to poverty and disgrace. But they do not urge that righteousness and chastity are to be desired solely because of their material rewards. These were first and foremost ends in themselves. When they are so sought, material rewards will follow. (g)

We have already observed that the earthly well-fare of the individual and the moral world order are closely united in the theory of requital. The rewards which attend virtue is, for the sages, the sign of divine pleasure. The sages did not hold that the morality of a course of action consists in its tendency to produce

a. Kent, Social Teachings of Prov., 141

b. C.G. Montefiore, J.C.R., Notes upon Prov, 1890, Vol. II, 446

happiness. They believed that the earthly happiness is the outward sign that the life which leads to it is approved by God, in His providential government. It should be mentioned here that the sages did not believe in a compensatory future life. God's just and wise rule was only capable of being manifested on earth.

The sages regard wisdom as more precious than silver.

"Take ye instruction, and not silver,

And knowledge rather than choice gold.

For wisdom is better than corals,

No treasures are equal to her." (VIII, 10, 11) (a)

Men are urged to strive after it rather than gold. And in what does this striving consist? It consists in right thinking and right doing. Yet wisdom brings riches. The love of wisdom is the secret of well-being. Great peace and happiness have they who obtain it. Since wisdom is the pole-star of all the sages' teachings, it is incorrect to say that they have no moral principle to steer them through the affairs of life. Eudaemonism is a part of their creed, but this is not because they have no principle, but because eudaemonism is an element in that principle and was inseparably connected with the justice and mercy of God.

Conclusion. It should be evident that the large number of secular maxims found in the book of Prov. should not evoke any tendency to diminish the religious fervor and enthusiasm reflected therefrom. ^(b) They indicate the true nature of its content, i.e., that the Prov. is a mirror of daily life, and as such every kind of maxim falls within the circle of the interest of its authors.

a. After Toy, Comm., 163-164.

b. Cambridge Bible, Prov., 27

The investigation conducted in this thesis inevitably leads to the conclusion that the Book of Prov. is thoroughly religious in character and tone. Its theistic creed is simple and direct. Its faith is firm and unquestioning. It recognizes no supernatural ^{being} except God, who manifests Himself in the moral world order. Virtue is allied with knowledge; Vice with ignorance. (XV,2,7,14; XIV,8,33; XIII,16) God is regarded as the Creator of the universe who rules in justice and love. His ethical attributes are unchallenged; there is no discussion of His justice as in Job; no doubt of the moral significance of the world as in Ecclesiastes.

The fear of Him is the sum-total of wisdom. In fact, the God-idea stands pre-eminent among the religious of the Prov. It outshines all the other ideas. The religious fiber and vigor of the Prov. gives it that superiority which led Hudal to agree with Kautzsch that the book "is one of the sublimest monuments of the religion of Israel." (a)

a. Kautzsch, DB, 729

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