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2016/17

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Paul S. Evans, Editor

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**Wisdom from the Wise:
Pedagogical Principles from Proverbs (and Beyond)**

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The Wisdom Literature stands out from the rest of the First Testament in terms of both its content and its approach. With respect to the content, one reads through the books of Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth in vain looking for references to the great heroes of Israelite tradition, such as Sarah and Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Deborah, David, etc. Nor is there any mention of the great divine interventions in Israelite history such as the Exodus or the entrance into the Land, nor major religious motifs such as the Covenant with Yahweh. On the other hand, while the distinctively Israelite aspects of the First Testament are absent from the wisdom books, the latter do share both formal and thematic similarities with the wisdom traditions of the surrounding nations. In Mesopotamia the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, and Babylonians all produced multiple proverb collections like in the book of Proverbs and portions of Qoheleth. So too did the ancient Egyptians, who also developed the Instruction genre that is paralleled in Prov 1–7. Both regions also produced a number of works that questioned divine justice in the case of innocent suffering, just as the book of Job does.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the scholarly response to this unique content was largely to ignore the wisdom books. A brief period of interest came in the 1920s with the

discovery of some of the ancient international wisdom literature, especially the Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope*, which was quickly recognized as the literary basis for Prov 22:17—24:22. However, in the middle of the last century scholarly attention to the wisdom literature waned again, sometimes taking the form of outright opposition. Hartmut Gese called it a “foreign body [*Fremdkörper*] in the Old Testament’s world,”¹ and this view is reflected, however, benignly, in the Old Testament Theologies written in this period.² To give just one example, in his 2-volume work Gerhard von Rad relegated the wisdom literature to portions of the appendix in the first volume, labelled “ISRAEL BEFORE YAHWEH (Israel’s Answer).”³ Horst Preuss went further than Gese, characterizing the wisdom literature as heathen, thinking that it should be excluded from Old Testament theology.⁴ Although the scholarly estimation of the wisdom books’ value has improved

¹Hartmut Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit Studien zu den Spruchen Solomos und zu dem Buche Hiob* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958), 2 (author’s translation).

²See the survey, with the low relative percentages of treatment given to the wisdom literature, in Charles H. H. Scobie, “The Place of Wisdom in Biblical Theology,” *BTB* 14 (1984): 43.

³Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology I: The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, introd. by Walter Brueggemann (1962; rpt. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 408–53, 455–59. He subsequently published a separate volume on the wisdom literature, but did not integrate it with the rest of the First Testament; in fact, he characterized the wisdom literature as being in “theological tension with traditional Yahwism: a harsher one could hardly be imagined” (Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin [London: SCM, 1971; rpt. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988], 314).

⁴Horst Dietrich Preuss, “Erwägungen zum theologischen Ort alttestamentlicher Weisheitsliteratur,” *EvT* 30 (1970): 393–417. See also Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. Leo G. Perdue, OTL (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995–96) and earlier, G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital*, SBT, vol. 8 (London: SCM Press, 1952), 104.

significantly since then,⁵ even a major promoter like James Crenshaw could refer to the wisdom literature in 1976 as “an orphan in the biblical household” and 34 years later still attribute to it “*a different world of thought*.”⁶

Crenshaw’s second phrase points to the other area in which the wisdom literature diverges from the rest of the First Testament. The wisdom literature’s approach, and especially the underlying justification for the content in the book of Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth, is drastically different. The basis for wisdom teachings is reflection upon human experience, collected over the years and passed on from one generation to the next until codified in the books that we have. As we will see shortly, the majority of the book of Proverbs consists of observations about human behaviour and human nature, plus analogies with the surrounding world. The book of Qoheleth makes this approach explicit: running throughout the book are the author’s claims that he is reporting on what he has “seen,” “observed,” “considered,” “experienced,” and so on. This foundation in common human experience has implications for how the wisdom writers convey their insights, and especially how they seek to persuade their audience concerning what they have to say. Unlike the narrative portions of the Pentateuch and the historical books, the wisdom literature does not support its claims by asserting divine intervention in Israel’s affairs. Unlike the prophets, the sages do not claim that their message was received directly from God via oracles and visions. And although they share some of the ethical concerns found in the Pentateuch’s legal material, the wisdom books do not present them as “Torah from Sinai.” Instead, they seek to persuade not by appeals to external authorities but through internal assent on the part of the hearer.

⁵Judging from this year’s program perhaps not within the CSBS, but one hopes that this year is an aberration, or at least not indicative of the membership’s attitude.

⁶James L. Crenshaw, “Prolegomenon,” in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (ed. James L. Crenshaw; New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1976), 1; James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (3rd ed.) (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 24–25, italics in the original.

They do so by presenting their material in such a way as to engage the listener or reader in the learning process itself.

In what follows I will reflect on this learning process within the book of Proverbs, with occasional forays beyond. I will focus on the main forms in the book of Proverbs, with the aim of identifying how they function pedagogically, i.e., the ways that different forms are used to convey teachings to the reader. At the same time, I will attend to the educational methodology in the book of Proverbs, clarifying the underlying presuppositions concerning how one acquires wisdom and the attendant ways the sages accomplish this.

The opening verses of the book of Proverbs spell out its purpose as one of instruction. Verses 1–6 constitute a single sentence, starting with the title: “The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.”⁷ This is followed by a series of consequential clauses in vv. 2–3 that elaborate the purpose of those “proverbs”: they are for “learning,” “understanding,” and “gaining instruction.” The book is meant to teach the young and the simple (v. 4) but the mature wise person can and should profit from it as well (v. 5). Verse 6 concludes that this collection will enable one to understand four different forms: (1) “a proverb;” (2) “a figure;” (3) “the words of the wise;” and (4) “their riddles.” But this list is neither exhaustive nor indicative of the order in which they occur, since the first wisdom form one encounters in the book of Proverbs is the Instruction.

Instructions:

The Instruction genre is well-known from Egyptian literature spanning two millennia, from the period of the “Old Kingdom” (ca. 2800–2200 BCE) to the *Instruction of Onkhsheshonqy* in the 5th century BCE. These Instructions share a number of characteristic features. The earliest ones are presented as a father’s instruction to his son, and later these terms took on the technical nuance of a teacher to a pupil. They contain three main elements:

⁷Except where noted, biblical quotations are from the *NRSV*.

1. A direct address to “my son,” reflecting the scribal tradition for a student, and containing a command that he “hear,” “listen,” etc. (rather than the indicative that is found in most shorter sayings).
2. Motive clause(s) giving the reasons for listening and obeying. These reasons are usually the benefits that derive from the teaching. They are often introduced by *kî*, (“for”) although final clauses stating the consequence may also be used. There is little appeal to anything beyond the presumably self-evident value of the teaching itself.
3. The teaching itself usually takes the form of conditional and result clauses, i.e. “if . . . then,” although straightforward commands are also used. The focus is on exhortation and argumentation in support of the teaching, distinguishing it from the tendency in shorter wisdom sayings simply to make an observation and leave the moral up to the reader or listener.

The focus in the Egyptian Instructions is usually on how one should function at the royal court, and this motif is often assisted by attributing the instruction to a Pharaoh or to one of his advisors. But even without such an explicit connection, the purpose remains the same, as seen by the nature of the advice that is given. Topics include how to deal with one’s inferiors and superiors, proper table manners, the importance of truthfulness and courtesy, and warnings about and against women. The goal was to ensure that one did not offend the king or members of the royal court in either words or actions, and the Instructions reflected the contemporary societal norms of proper behaviour, with its biases and prejudices. Symptomatic of this is the negative view of women: the instructions tended to paint women as temptresses who would try to seduce the young pupil and lead him astray. The dangers involved when such women were related to the Pharaoh or influential members of the court would be obvious to all, and so students training to serve there were frequently warned against becoming involved with women, however innocently that relationship might begin.

There are ten instances of the Instruction genre in Prov 1–7, with many of the same concerns as the Egyptian versions. The longest is Prov 2. It opens with an address to “my child,” followed by four verses encouraging him to listen to the teaching. Verses 5–19 present various reasons why he should do so, followed by 3 verses containing the actual teaching, namely, describing the “two paths” of the good and the wicked, a common theme in the wisdom literature. But the chapter is more artfully constructed than this basic outline suggests. Proverbs 2 consists of a single sentence comprising 22 verses (22 lines in the Hebrew), which is the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. While it is not an acrostic, in which each successive line starts with the next letter of the alphabet, by echoing the length of the Hebrew alphabet, the poem suggests that it is not a random collection of thoughts but rather a comprehensive composition that expresses all one needs to know. This is reinforced through formal features of the poem that create a well-structured discourse consisting of two evenly balanced halves with 11 verses each, which are themselves arranged into 3 sections consisting of 4 + 4 + 3 verses.⁸ If we bracket the opening address to “my child” we have the following:

Part I consists of vv. 1–11 (11 lines) in which the word “wisdom” or a synonym occurs 9x.

- a) vv. 1–4 begins with *aleph* (ʾ/א, the 1st Hebrew letter), found in the word *ʾim* (“if”)
- b) vv. 5–8 begins with *aleph* in the words *ʾāz tābîn* (“then you will understand”)
- c) vv. 9–11 begins with *aleph* in the words *ʾāz tābîn* (“then you will understand”)

⁸Patrick W. Skehan, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*, CBQMS, vol. 1 (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1971), 9.

Part II consists of vv. 12–22 (11 lines) in which the word *derek* (“path/way”) occurs 9x (as did “wisdom” and its synonyms in the first half).

- a) vv. 12–15 begins with *lamed* (ל/לָ, the 12th Hebrew letter) in the word *lēhaṣṣîlkâ* (“to save you”)
- b) vv. 16–19 begins with *lamed*/the word *lēhaṣṣîlkâ* (“to save you”)
- c) vv. 20–22 begins with *lamed* in the word *lēma’an* (“therefore”)

Each of these six sections deal with separate but related topics in a single sentence:

- Part I a) (vv. 1–4) This extended conditional clause introduces wisdom as the object of the reader’s desire. The next four sections then describe the result of achieving that goal:
- Part I b) (vv. 5–8) One gains religious understanding (“the fear of the Lord”), which leads to
- Part I c) (vv. 9–11) Ethical understanding (distinguishing “righteousness and justice”) and
- Part II a) (vv. 12–15) This understanding will “deliver” the reader from evil men and . . .
- Part II b) (vv. 16–19) “adulterous women.”
- Part II c) (vv. 20–22) This concluding clause (“therefore”) presents the common “two paths” wisdom motif, using the keyword that is repeated nine times in the second half of the poem.

These six topics are reflected in the other nine Instructions in the book, as seen in the following chart:⁹

⁹This is based on, but also goes beyond, the analysis of Skehan, *Studies*, 9–10.

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Proverbs 2	Topic	Proverbs 1–7
Part I a) 1–4	Wisdom	4:1–9
b) 5–8	Religious understanding	3:1–12
c) 9–11	Ethical understanding	4:20–27
Part II a) 12–15	Evil men	1:8–19; 4:10–19
b) 16–19	Adulterous women	5:1–23; 6:20–35; 7:1–27
c) 20–22	The two paths	3:21–35

These other nine Instructions use the same approach, urging a “child” to conform to the teaching in each on the basis of the inherent value of the teaching itself, without appeal to any external authority. In addition, the three passages dealing with adulterous women (Section 5) show how instructions can be adapted and developed, using additional forms as part of larger instructions to reinforce their lessons: Prov 5:15–18 includes an allegory of one’s wife as a cistern of water that is sufficient for one’s thirst but not to be shared with others, 6:27–29 uses the effects of fire as a metaphor for adultery, and 7:6–23 employs a didactic story about a young man being seduced.

In sum, Prov 2 is programmatic for the other nine Instructions in the book of Proverbs. But it is only after the reader was worked through the first seven chapters, perhaps many times, that she would become wise enough to discern the overarching structure of Prov 2, and from there the connections with the other nine Instructions.

Proverbs:

The majority of the book of Proverbs consists of wisdom sayings, two-line (or occasionally more) aphoristic sentences. The headings to Prov 10:1–22:16 and 25–29 identify them as “proverbs” (*mēšālīm*), Prov 22:17–24:22 introduces “the words of the wise,” and the opening verse of Prov 24:23–34 simply states that “these also are from the wise.” The common translation of

māšāl into English as “proverb” is not exhaustive, since the word is also used of parables (Ezek 17:2), prophetic utterances (Num 23:7), taunts (Isa 14:4), speeches (Job 27:1; 29:1), bywords (Jer 24:9), etc. However, “proverb” does reflect the actual contents of these portions of the book far better than any of the other renderings, and corresponds to one of the forms named in Prov 1:6. Nevertheless, the material in these sections can be subdivided into two categories: the “admonition or prohibition” as well as the “sentence.” The latter is by far more common: by Walter Zimmerli’s count, the admonition occurs only 25 times out of 402 sayings in the two main collections, i.e., Prov 10:1—22:16 and Prov 25–29.¹⁰

The two types of sayings can be distinguished from each other by virtue of their mode of address. The admonition, as one would expect, uses the imperative, and its counterpart, the prohibition, negates the command either with “do not” or “you shall not.”¹¹ In either case, as we can see from the following examples, the command (the first two) or prohibition (the second two) is followed by a motivational clause indicating what will result from doing or not doing what the preceding line urges:¹²

Prov 19:20 Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom for the future

Prov 22:6 Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray

Prov 23:9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,
who will only despise the wisdom of your words

¹⁰Walther Zimmerli, “Concerning the Structure of Old Testament Wisdom,” in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (ed. James L. Crenshaw; New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1976), 182.

¹¹On the admonition see Philip Johannes Nel, *The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs*, BZAW, vol. 158 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982).

¹²The sequence is reversed in Prov 17:14; 20:18, 19. This infrequency reinforces a command/prohibition + motivation as the normal order.

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Prov 27:1 Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may bring

At times, the admonition or prohibition plus the motivation can span more than one verse. For example, in these examples each element consists of an entire verse:

Prov 27:23 Know well the condition of your flocks,
and give attention to your herds;
Prov 27:24 for riches do not last forever,
nor a crown for all generations.

Prov 25:6 Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence
or stand in the place of the great;
Prov 25:7 for it is better to be told, "Come up here,"
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

A single admonition or prohibition can be even longer. In Prov 23:6–8, the first verse contains a prohibition while the motivation occupies the next two verses. Proverbs 23:22–23 presents an extended admonition, followed by an equal two-verse motivation in vv. 24–25. The longest single prohibition is Prov 23:31–35, where the initial verse advises against wine, and the next four verses seek to motivate the reader through an extensive catalogue of its negative effects:

Do not look at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup
and goes down smoothly.
At the last it bites like a serpent,
and stings like an adder.
Your eyes will see strange things,
and your mind utter perverse things.
You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea,
like one who lies on the top of a mast.
"They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt;

they beat me, but I did not feel it.
When shall I awake?
I will seek another drink.”

These longer motivations, especially the last one, are similar in length to the motive section of the Instruction genre, with which the admonition and prohibition have obvious structural similarities, namely a teaching followed by a motive for following it. They also share pedagogical approaches: like the Instruction, the admonition/prohibition does not appeal to external authorities such as rulers, laws or divine revelation. Rather, its authority resides in the motivation, which is rooted in observations of the consequences of one's actions that the reader is expected to recognize from her own experience and accept as valid.¹³

In contrast to the admonition/prohibition, the sentence is always in the indicative, as a simple statement about the way things are. As such, the sentence does not include any motivational arguments, but rather appeals to universal human experience. Sometimes this entails observations about human nature. Such sayings do not explicitly urge a particular course of action, and in some cases none is envisioned. For instance, Prov 13:7 and 14:20 simply describe different financial states, although most would opt to be rich if possible:

Prov 13:7 Some pretend to be rich, yet have nothing;
others pretend to be poor, yet have great wealth.

Prov 14:20 The poor are disliked even by their neighbors,
but the rich have many friends.

But the first example also raises the question of how an observer can know whether people are what they claim to be while the second one forces one to consider who are true friends. Similarly, a preferred mode of speech might be implicit in Prov 15:1, but it is

¹³Philip Johannes Nel, “Authority in the Wisdom Admonitions,” *ZAW* 93 (1981): 418–26; Nel, *Structure and Ethos*, 83–115.

left to the reader to discern what that is and then decide whether or not to act accordingly, while Prov 20:14 summarizes without comment the attitudes of a successful haggler before and after a purchase:

Prov 15:1 A soft tongue turns away wrath
but a harsh word stirs up anger

Prov 20:14 “Bad, bad,” says the buyer,
then goes away and boasts.

All these sayings provoke insight into human affairs and thus promote greater understanding of how society functions.

Other wisdom sentences rely on analogies between nature and human affairs. Sometimes the comparison is stated explicitly through a comparative *kaph*:

Prov 26:1 Like snow in summer or rain in harvest,
so honor is not fitting for a fool.

Prov 26:11 Like a dog that returns to its vomit
is a fool who reverts to his folly.

Other times two statements are simply juxtaposed, without a *kaph*:

Prov 26:14 A door turns on its hinges,
a lazy person turns in bed.

Prov 26:17 One who takes a passing dog by the ears,
one who meddles in the quarrel of another.

Once again, these analogies do not directly promote a particular way of behaving, although the preferred option is usually obvious. However, the second type, where two things are simply stated side by side, do require us to identify the common element, thereby involving the reader in the learning process. This is often lost in

modern translations because they usually make the comparison explicit by adding comparative words; the *NRSV*, for instance, adds “so” at the beginning of the second line in Prov 26:14 and “like” at the beginning of 26:17. Unfortunately, this undermines the distinctive pedagogical effect of juxtaposing statements without explicitly comparing them. Even if the point of comparison seems obvious, when the sages do not state it explicitly this requires that the reader supply it, thereby entering into the learning process rather than passively absorbing information.

A major purpose of the sayings in Proverbs is to categorize human experience into understandable areas in order to assist one in living one’s life. In the words of R. B. Y. Scott, one of the founding members of the CSBS, the book contains,

the idea *of order*, of norms, rules, right values, and due proportions. This is expressed in proverbs which bring to light the identity or equivalence of some things and the non-identity of others, the distinction of the appearance from the reality, common factors and characteristics, cause and consequence; and also what is *contrary to right order*: the irregular, absurd, paradoxical, and impossible.¹⁴

Scott categorized proverbs into seven patterns that reflect the sages’ efforts to bring order and structure to their experience,¹⁵ and while his proposal is now fifty years old, it is still helpful for understanding the overall goal of the sayings collections in Proverbs.

¹⁴R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs. Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (2nd ed.) AB, vol. 18 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 4–5, italics in the original.

¹⁵Scott, *Proverbs. Ecclesiastes*, 5–8; R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* (New York: Collier Books, 1971), 59–63.

The first pattern is “identity, equivalence, or invariable association,” which expresses things that appear different but are actually the same. Scott offers modern examples such as “A friend in need is a friend indeed” or “A penny saved is a penny earned” alongside biblical instances such as “Where there are no oxen, there is no grain” (Prov 14:4a) and “Whoever flatters a neighbor is spreading a net for the neighbor’s feet” (Prov 29:5).¹⁶

The second category is “non-identity, contrast, or paradox,” i.e., things that at first glance seem the same but on further consideration are not. Today we repeat Shakespeare’s “All that glitters is not gold” (although the correct formulation would be “Not all that glitters is gold”) or Robert Frost’s “Good fences make good neighbors.”¹⁷ The book of Proverbs expresses this category through aphorisms such as “A soft tongue can break bones” (Prov 25:15b) and “To a ravenous appetite even the bitter is sweet” (Prov 27:7b).

Scott’s next proverb pattern is that of “similarity, analogy, or type,” comprising things that are like one another either in nature or in action. We can compare “A chip off the old block” and “Time and tide wait for no one” to the following sayings from Proverbs 25: “Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest // are faithful messengers to those who send them” (Prov 25:13a–b); one would think that snow in winter would be a bad thing, but the point is clarified through a third line: “they refresh the spirit of their masters.” Two examples without an explicit comparison, are: “A bad tooth or a lame foot // trust in a faithless person in time of trouble” (Prov 25:19); “Cold water to a thirsty soul // good news

¹⁶For each category Scott offers examples from beyond the book of Proverbs and even beyond the wisdom literature in order to illustrate the breadth of such proverbs in the biblical literature, but in keeping with the focus of this study I only cite examples from within Proverbs.

¹⁷William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 1596; Robert Frost, “Mending Wall,” in *North of Boston* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1917).

from a far country” (Prov 25:25), which echoes the thought of Prov 25:13.¹⁸

A fourth proverb idiom deals with “what is contrary to right order, and so is futile or absurd,” such as “Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched” and “What’s the use of running when you are on the wrong road?” Examples from Proverbs include “Why should fools have a price in hand to buy wisdom // when they have no mind to learn?” (Prov 17:16) or, once again, “A door turns on its hinges // a lazy person in bed” (Prov 26:14).¹⁹

A fifth proverb type “classifies and characterizes persons, actions, or situations,” for example, “Children and fools speak the truth” and “A rolling stone gathers no moss.” Similarly, the book of Proverbs offers characterizations, among others, of the insolent (“A scoffer does not listen to rebuke”; Prov 13:1b), the fool (“The simple believe everything”; Prov 14:15a), a contentious partner (“A wife’s quarreling is a continual dripping of rain”; Prov 19:13b) and the sluggard (“The lazy person buries a hand in the dish // and is too tired to bring it back to the mouth”; Prov 26:15).²⁰

Scott’s sixth proverb pattern is “value, relative value or priority, proportion or degree”; most of us are familiar with such modern saying as “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” or “Better late than never.” Examples of this kind of proverb include “It is better to be poor than a liar” (Prov 19:22b), “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches” (Prov 22:1a) or the more elaborate “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; // how much more when brought with evil intent” (Prov 21:27).

The seventh proverb pattern focuses on “consequences of human character and behavior.” Just as we might say “Nothing ventured, nothing gained,” “Give an inch and they’ll take a mile” or “Don’t bite off more than you can chew!” the book of Proverbs makes observations like, “A glad heart makes a cheerful

¹⁸The *NRSV* inserts “Like” at the beginning of the following proverbs and “is” at the beginning of the second line of each.

¹⁹The *NRSV* adds “As” and “so” at the beginning of the successive lines in Prov 26:14.

²⁰Scott includes the numerical saying in this group, but it has its own distinctive features and will be considered separately below.

countenance” (Prov 15:13a) and “Whoever digs a pit will fall into it // and a stone will come back on the one who starts it rolling” (Prov 26:27).

I want to add two additional insights related to Scott’s seven categories. The first is that they are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they may overlap, such that a saying exhibits more than one of these characteristics at a time. For instance, Scott’s sixth pattern is “value, relative value or priority, proportion or degree.” Sometimes this takes the form of a simple statement that something is good:

Prov 15:23 To make an apt answer is a joy to anyone,
and a word in season, how good it is!

Prov 17:22 A cheerful heart is a good medicine,
but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.

Conversely, this can take the form of “x is not good.” For instance, Prov 19:2 tells us “Desire without knowledge is not good” while the advice to eat honey in Prov 24:13 is relativized in Prov 25:27, which uses its initial statement as the basis for a comparative lesson about life:

Prov 24:13 My child, eat honey, for it is good,
and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to
your taste.

Prov 25:27 It is not good to eat much honey,
or to seek honor on top of honor.

At times, however, a statement of relative value also moves into the realm of what is contrary to right order, which is Scott’s fourth category:

Prov 17:7 Fine speech is not becoming to a fool;
still less is false speech to a ruler.

Prov 17:26 To impose a fine on the innocent is not right,
or to flog the noble for their integrity.

Prov 19:10 It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury,
much less for a slave to rule over princes.

This blurring is relevant for the learning process. Anyone who studied the book of Proverbs would eventually realize that these different proverb patterns that are meant to organize and structure one's experience of the world sometimes overlap. This transfer across categories leads to the realization that human existence is not, in fact, always neatly categorized, and requires additional reflection in order to determine how to apply such proverbs in one's own life.

The second thing to say about these categories also falls into the realm of relative value, specifically the "Better Saying." The Hebrew syntax of these statements has a bearing on how the saying itself works to promote, or provoke, insight and understanding. The word order in Hebrew is almost always "good is X, more than Y." Often this still amounts to a simple statement about proportional worth.²¹

Prov 16:16 How good it is to get wisdom, more than gold!
To get understanding is to be chosen, more than
silver.

Prov 16:32 Good is one who is slow to anger, more than the
mighty,
and one whose temper is controlled, more than
one who captures a city.

At times, the first element is less than desirable, but it is qualified by a positive attribute, and therefore is deemed

²¹Translations of the following better sayings are my own fairly literal renderings in order to highlight the syntax.

acceptable even without the secondary point of comparison. In these cases the second line merely serves to reinforce the first:

Prov 12:9 It is good to be despised and have a servant,
more than to be self-important and lack food.

Prov 15:17 Good is a meal of herbs and love is there
more than a fatted ox and hatred with it.

Prov 16:8 Good is a little with righteousness
more than a large income with injustice.

However, at the other extreme is a purely negative first part, without a positive qualifier and therefore with no immediately obvious redeeming value:

Prov 21:19 It is good to live in a desert land
more than a contentious and fretful wife.

Prov 27:5 Good is open rebuke
more than hidden love.

It is only with the addition of the second part, introduced by the comparative *min* preposition, that the value of the first is brought into view. The apparent paradox of the initial statement is resolved through the perspective provided by its comparison with another thing, action, possession, etc.

Qoheleth takes this latter approach further by presenting purely negative aspects as positive. In so doing he calls into question the traditional wisdom concerning what is good and what is not. He may do this by following a positive comparison with a negative one:

Qoh 7:1 Good is a name, more than good ointment,
and the day of death, more than the day of birth.

Alternatively, the author sometimes places the negative element first in the statement:

Qoh 7:2a–b It is good to go to the house of mourning
more than to go to the house of feasting
for this is the end of everyone,
and the living will lay it to heart.

Qoh 7:3 Good is sorrow
more than laughter,
for by sadness of countenance
the heart is made glad.

In the last two examples Qoheleth expands the basic better saying to add an explanation, which in the case of 7:3 at least is counter-intuitive (contrast Prov 15:13a: “A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance”), provoking the reader to evaluate the author’s gloomy advice even more deeply.

Another feature of the sayings collections in Proverbs is the repetition of specific sayings, either within a single collection (e.g., Prov 10:1 and 15:20; 28:12 and 28:28) or in distinct collections (e.g., 12:11 and 28:19; 24:23 and 28:21).²² The degree of repetition varies: there may be verbatim duplication of an entire saying, either the first or second line might be identical, or the same sentiment could be expressed in different words. An example of the first is Prov 14:12, which is identical to Prov 16:25 (“There is a way that seems right to a person // but its end is the way to death”). Related to verbatim duplication is the restatement of an idea with similar words, almost like long-distance parallelism:

²²For a complete listing of doublets in the book of Proverbs and discussions see Daniel C. Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993); Knut Martin Heim, *Poetic Imagination in Proverbs: Variant Repetitions and the Nature of Poetry*, BBRSup, vol. 4 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

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- Prov 16:2 All one's ways may be pure in one's own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the spirit.
Prov 21:2 All deeds are right in the sight of the doer,
but the LORD weighs the heart.

Similarly, two sayings can express similar ideas:

- Prov 14:16 The wise are cautious and turn away from evil,
but the fool throws off restraint and is careless.
Prov 22:3 The clever see danger and hide;
but the simple go on, and suffer for it.

Doublets that repeat only part of a saying show a fair amount of diversity. Often, the first line is identical while the second differs. Sometimes this divergence is minimal (indicated by underlining):

- Prov 19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished,
and a liar will not escape.
Prov 19:9 A false witness will not go unpunished,
and the liar will perish.
Prov 10:1 A wise child makes a glad father,
but a foolish child is a mother's grief.
Prov 15:20 A wise child makes a glad father,
but the foolish despise their mothers.

Other times the second line is completely different, resulting in an entirely new conclusion:

- Prov 10:15 The wealth of the rich is their fortress;
the poverty of the poor is their ruin.
Prov 18:11 The wealth of the rich is their strong city;
in their imagination it is like a high wall.

The first of the preceding proverbs contrasts the rich and the poor whereas the second one questions the validity of the rich believing that their wealth will protect them. The following pair also differ:

Prov 16:18 Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Prov 18:12 Before destruction one's heart is haughty,
but humility goes before honor.

In this case the first example makes two statements about the proud and haughty whereas the second one contrasts the fate of the haughty and the humble. The divergence in the second line can even change an indicative sentence into a prohibition:

Prov 11:13 A gossip goes about telling secrets,
but one who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a
confidence.

Prov 20:19 A gossip reveals secrets;
therefore do not associate with a babblers.

Alternatively, the first line might differ while the second remains the same:

Prov 13:14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,
so that one may avoid the snares of death.

Prov 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
so that one may avoid the snares of death.

Prov 15:33 The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom,
and humility goes before honor.

Prov 18:12 Before destruction one's heart is haughty,
but humility goes before honor.

From a diachronic perspective, such doublets constitute evidence of a lengthy compositional process involving the circulation of sayings in more than one context and their gradual incorporation into different collections that were eventually joined

to form the book of Proverbs as we now have it.²³ On a synchronic level, they have implications for the reader's involvement in the learning process. Verbatim repetition and the restatement of ideas in similar words, especially alongside less complete repetition elsewhere, highlights the duplication and calls for an explanation that the reader has to provide. Why are these sayings reproduced completely when others are not? What in their content is worth such treatment? How and why is their teaching more significant than other sayings? At the same time, repetition with divergence must also be taken into account. Different opening or closing lines relativize those sayings in their different literary locations. Why do they differ? Why is a saying appropriate in one context but not another? Clearly, if the content can be altered then it is not universally applicable. But it is up to the reader to determine which version is applicable in concrete situations—the sayings themselves do not provide any answers, they merely provoke the questions.

Ambiguity is also present in Prov 26:4–5, although it is not a case of proverbial duplication. Rather, a prohibition is immediately followed by a contradictory admonition:

Do not answer fools according to their folly,
or you will be a fool yourself.
Answer fools according to their folly,
or they will be wise in their own eyes.

This calls to mind modern aphorisms like “Absence makes the heart grow fonder” alongside “Out of sight out of mind” or “Look before you leap” while bearing in mind that “The one who hesitates is lost.” Well, which is it? Obviously the situation determines the appropriate wisdom. If you're being chased through the woods by a bear and burst into a clearing at the edge of a cliff overlooking water, is it “Look before you leap” or “The one who hesitates is lost?” It depends on how close the bear is. If it is a few

²³Cf. Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs*, 10–14, 30–62; Heim, *Poetic Imagination in Proverbs*, 610–33.

minutes behind, then “Look before you leap.” Look around and see if there is a path down to the water. But if you can feel the bear’s breath on your neck, then “The one who hesitates is lost”: jump and hope for deep water. Being able to determine the proper response to any situation is what characterizes an individual as wise. And the key to making that determination is experience, both one’s own and that of society, mutually interpreting each other, complementing and supplementing individual insights with collective experience and *vice versa*. In short, readers of Proverbs have to decide when and when not to “answer fools according to their folly,” and the juxtaposition of the two sayings in Prov 26 *requires* that they make that judgement.

Yet another type of ambiguity is created when the two lines of a proverb do not fully match each other as either synonymous or antithetical parallelism. These deviations from the norm should not simply be lumped together as “synthetic parallelism,” to use Bishop Lowth’s catchall term for whatever didn’t fit into his other two categories.²⁴ Since the two lines of many proverbs are semantically balanced, the reader expects that to be the norm, and the exceptions stand out as intentional and call for an explanation. Michael V. Fox has already examined the phenomenon of what he calls “disjointed proverbs,” and I will simply present two of his examples to illustrate the matter.²⁵

²⁴See Robert Lowth, *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum (Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews)*, 1753; Robert Lowth, *Isaiah: A New Translation with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes Critical, Philological, and Explanatory*, 1778. A critique of his taxonomy is found in James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

²⁵Michael V. Fox, “The Rhetoric of Disjointed Proverbs,” *JSOT* 29 (2004): 165–77; Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, vol. 18B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 494–98. See also the discussions of “elliptical sayings” in Richard J. Clifford, “Your Attention Please! Heeding the Proverbs,” *JSOT* 29 (2004): 158–59, and “imprecise parallelism” in Heim, *Poetic Imagination in Proverbs*, *passim*. The proverbs are cited according to Fox’s translation.

Prov 13:5 The righteous man hates a deceitful word,
but the wicked will be ashamed and disgraced

The two halves of Prov 13:5 do not fully correspond to each other. While the righteous and wicked are standard polar opposites in the wisdom literature, the second part of each line are not antithetical. The first line presents an emotion directed against an abstract object while the second describes the negative consequence of some unspecified action. Fox solves the problem by providing a consequence in the first line that is the opposite of the consequence in the second line, plus an action in the second line in contrast to the emotional one in the first. The result is:

The righteous man hates a deceitful word *and will gain honor*,
but the wicked one *loves a deceitful word* and will be
ashamed and disgraced.

Another example is Prov 27:6:

Prov 27:6 Faithful are the wounds (inflicted by) a friend,
but profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

Once again we have imprecise parallelism between the two halves of the saying. “Friend” and “enemy” are clearly opposite while “wounds” and “kisses” are approximately so. However, there is no apparent correlation between “faithful” and “profuse,” to say nothing of why numerous kisses are, in themselves, undesirable. But the problem is removed by elaborating the divergent nature of the wounds and kisses in keeping with the expected attitudes of a friend or an enemy:

Faithful *but few* are the wounds (inflicted by) a friend,
but profuse *and treacherous* are the kisses of an enemy.

In both examples, the imprecise parallelism has provoked a reader, in this case Fox, to consider why the two lines of each proverb do

not cohere more precisely, and then supply additional material in order to produce a more satisfactory result. As Fox notes, by not making the two lines match more explicitly, the author has challenged the reader to do so, thereby engaging in the learning process itself and ultimately adding to the wisdom contained in the book of Proverbs. But while Fox's solutions to these and other examples are persuasive, they should not be considered definitive. Instead, subsequent readers should look for additional ways to come to terms with these and other "disjointed proverbs," thereby continuing the learning process for themselves.

Figures:

According to Prov 1:6, the book will also help one understand "figures."²⁶ Three forms can be included under this heading, two of which only occur once and twice respectively in Proverbs. An allegory is an extended metaphor in which there is a one-to-one correspondence between elements in the text and things outside of the text.²⁷ Thus, in Prov 5:15–18a a cistern corresponds to a wife, as vv. 18b–20 makes clear (cf. Song 4:12, 15) while the water refers to sexual activity, which the addressee should draw from his own cistern (wife) while preventing others from enjoying it from that same source. A second kind of "figure" in Proverbs is a didactic story that provides the basis for a moral.²⁸ This form occurs in Prov 7:6–23 and 24:30–34. The first narrates the seduction of a young man and the second describes the decrepit property of a lazy person. Neither appeals to the speaker's own

²⁶Thus the *NRSV*. The root *lyš* means "to scoff" and BDB defines *mēlišā* as "satire, mocking poem," with an alternative meaning of "figure, enigma." The former does not fit the context of Prov 1:6. For the latter, cf. the *hiphil* participle *ōmēliš* with the meaning "interpreter."

²⁷Philip Johannes Nel, "The Genres of Biblical Wisdom Literature," *JNSL* 9 (1981): 132–33; Roland E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, Esther*, FOTL, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 172; Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 31.

²⁸James L. Crenshaw, "Wisdom," in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, Trinity University Monograph Series in Religion, vol. 2 (ed. John Haralson Hayes; San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), 261–62; Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 32; Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 176.

experience but rather to what he has observed, followed by the lesson to be drawn from the story.

A more frequent enigmatic form in Proverbs is the numerical saying, which involves a numerical progression, introduced with the formula $x / x + 1$.²⁹ With one exception, this form is clustered in Prov 30 (vv. 5–16, 18–19, 21–23, 24–28, 29–31, plus Prov 6:16–19). The $x / x + 1$ sequence is also found in a number of other biblical books and elsewhere in the ancient Near East.³⁰ Often they simply list incremental numbers in successive lines, without using the $x / x + 1$ formula. For example, Mic 5:4 (Eng v. 5) asserts that “seven shepherds” and “eight rulers” will defend against the invading Assyrians, and Hos 6:2 hopes that “After two days he will revive us // on the third day he will raise us up.” Amos 1–2 does employ the formula, castigating different nations “for three transgressions . . . and for four,” but with the exception of Israel he only mentions one transgression. The wisdom usage, however, enumerates individual elements up to the higher number. Moreover, the point is not just to list a number of things but to lead up to and emphasize the final element in the series, which often presents a surprising twist.³¹ Proverbs 30:18–19 exemplifies this:

²⁹On the form in general see Wolfgang M. W. Roth, “The Numerical Sequence $x/x+1$ in the Old Testament,” *VT* 12 (1962): 300–11; Wolfgang M. W. Roth, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament*, VTSup, vol. 13 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), passim; Georg Sauer, *Die Sprüche Agurs: Untersuchungen zur Herkunft, Verbreitung und Bedeutung einer biblischen Stilform unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Proverbia c. 30*, BWANT, vol. 5.4 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1963).

³⁰See the lists (and discussion) in the works by Roth in the preceding note.

³¹The full form is found in other wisdom texts at Job 5:17–27; Sir 25:7–11; 26:5–6, 28–29; 50:25–26. The emphatic aspect of the final item is present to various degrees, most explicitly in Prov 6:19; 30:18–19, 29–31; Sir 25:7–11; 26:6–9, 28–29; 50:26. The Sirach texts in particular expound on the final item to varying lengths. Amos has adapted the climactic element of wisdom form, but by naming only one transgression he does not use it as a wisdom form: John L. McLaughlin, “Is Amos (Still) Among the Wise?” *JBL* 133 (2014): 284–86.

Three things are too wonderful for me
Four I do not understand:
the way of a bird in the sky
the way of a serpent on a rock
the way of a ship upon the sea
the way of a man with a woman.

The final line requires the reader to make a connection between the previously listed “way” of a bird, a serpent, and a ship, and the “way” of a man and a woman. This reflects the didactic nature of the form, namely to correlate the items listed and make connections among apparently disparate things.³² Also, the unexpectedness of the last line shakes our presuppositions and forces us to think, but by leaving the conclusion to the reader the wisdom writers acknowledge the limitations of human wisdom.

*Riddles:*³³

Proverbs 1:6 promises assistance in understanding riddles, so it is surprising that there are none in the book.³⁴ In fact, the only example of a riddle in the First Testament is Samson’s challenge to his Philistine wedding guests in Judg 14:14 (“Out of the eater came something to eat // Out of the strong came something sweet”). Scholars have sought to account for the lack of riddles in Proverbs by explaining various texts as reconstructed riddles. One possibility is that riddles underlie numerical sayings, with the items corresponding to the x number constituting a question as to what else is like them, with the final x + 1 item providing the answer to

³²Scott, *Proverbs. Ecclesiastes*, 7, includes the numerical saying in his fifth proverb type, which “classifies and characterizes persons, actions, or situations,” although in keeping with the occasional crossover of categories noted earlier it also has affinities with his third category of “similarity, analogy, or type.”

³³Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 181; Nel, “The Genres of Biblical Wisdom Literature,” 133–34; James L. Crenshaw, “Riddles,” in *ABD*, 5.721–23.

³⁴Cf. Sir 39:3, which lists riddles as one of the characteristic concerns of the sage.

the riddle.³⁵ Thus our earlier example would be formulated instead as “What is like the way of a bird . . . a serpent . . . a ship . . .” with the answer being “a man with a woman.” Another option is to formulate the opening lines as a question, e.g., “What are three or four things that move but leave no trace?” with the next four lines providing the answer.³⁶ If so, the numerical saying clearly has been developed by the sages, in that it does not just point out paradox in language but attempts to classify and categorize.

In addition, there are a number of comparative sayings in Proverbs that present a shocking image that draws the reader or listener up short.³⁷ The first part looks initially like a statement of what is contrary to right order, but closer examination indicates that it goes beyond this to raise a question: the absurdity of the image makes us ask, “what is this about?” Such sayings are often instances of directly juxtaposed lines without an explicit statement of comparison:

Prov 11:22 A gold ring in a pig’s snout
a beautiful woman without good sense.

Prov 25:14 Clouds and wind without rain
one who boasts of a gift never given.

But if the first part of the saying is formulated as a riddle question, then the answer lies in the second half of the saying:

Prov 11:22 *What is like* a gold ring in a pig’s snout?
A beautiful woman without good sense.

³⁵Crenshaw, “Riddles,” 5.721. Contrast Hans-Peter Müller, “Der Begriff ‘Rätsel’ im Alten Testament,” *VT* 20 (1970): 465–69.

³⁶Thus Harry Torcszyner, “The Riddle in the Bible,” *HUCA* 1 (1924): 135–36.

³⁷See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 175–79.

Prov 25:14 *What is like* clouds and wind without rain?
One who boasts of a gift never given.

This point is reinforced by the following examples, a straightforward sentence and a less explicit comparison of measurements:

Prov 11:1 A false balance is an abomination to the LORD,
but an accurate weight is his delight.

Prov 20:10 Diverse weights and diverse measures
both are an abomination to the LORD.

But if the first line of the latter is cast as a question, it could serve as a riddle:

Prov 20:10 *How are* diverse weights and diverse measures
alike?
both are an abomination to the LORD.

Granted, the recasting of specific numerical sayings or proverbs as riddles is speculative, but at the very least the preceding examples do engage the reader or listener in the text in order to puzzle out the answer to the questions.

Concluding Remarks:

The basic data upon which the wisdom tradition reflects is human experience. Thus, the premise behind most of the sayings in Proverbs is that “this is the way things are, and this is the way the world works.” The reason the wisdom teachers can make such assertions is that they are transmitting the cumulative wisdom of the culture, built upon the collective experience of the larger society. This is the result of trial and error, such that “Good judgement comes from experience, and experience comes from

bad judgement.”³⁸ Even when the sages do add motive clauses to support an explicit command to follow a certain course of action, that very line of argumentation is itself based on experience: “if you do X, Y will happen” or “Do this so that you will reap this reward.” But more often it is a simple statement of cause and effect and the reader is left to draw a conclusion as to the proper course of action. The attitude of the wise, therefore, is that the truth of what they say is self-evident. But at the same time, if the basic principle of wisdom instruction is that insight is drawn from human experience then one must always be open to new insights coming from that source, including insights that are directly opposite to the “conventional wisdom.” This happens within the wisdom tradition itself. The Book of Job is a vehement protest against the standard wisdom doctrine of retribution that the good are always blessed and the wicked always punished. Similarly, Qoheleth takes a rather cynical stance toward previous wisdom traditions, frequently turning established proverbial wisdom on its head.

There is a secondary effect of this approach, as well. It implicitly involves the reader or listener. It challenges us to reflect upon what has been said in order to decide whether or not it is correct. It draws us into the teaching process and transforms it into a learning process. In other words, it makes us examine individual sayings in order to determine whether or not they are consistent with our own experience. The corollary to this is that we also check our experience against the saying. Does our own experience of a particular situation match the experience that underlies the saying. If it does not, why not? Perhaps there is something in my personal experience that makes it incompatible with a particular saying. If I compare the wisdom tradition with my own life experiences, I can either conclude that a specific saying is incorrect, at least in some cases such as my own, or it may be that my experience is inadequate and needs to be supplemented by the

³⁸This saying has been attributed to numerous individuals, including Mark Twain and Will Rogers, but it goes back at least to Nasreddin, a 13th Century CE Seljuq sufi.

wisdom presented in a given saying. In one sense it doesn't matter what conclusion I draw; what is far more important is that *I* have drawn it. I have entered into the process and in so doing I have integrated it into my own experience. I have done what the sages intended: I have learned wisdom.

**Minutes of the 2016 CSBS
Annual General Meeting**

University of Calgary
Calgary, AB
May 28, 3:30pm

Attendees: Keith Bodner, Willi Braun, John Leo McLaughlin, Bruce Worthington, Emily Laflèche, Paul Evans, Alex Damm, Nick Meyer, David Miller, Beth Stovell, Glen Taylor, Marvin Miller, Marion Taylor, Iain Provan, Rachel Krohn, Dan Fraikin, Jennifer Frim, Stanley E. Porter, Bill Richards, Joyce-ann Spinney, Andrew Perrin, Joshua Matson, Eileen Schuller, Dan Machiela, John Kohler, Zeba Crook, Steve Wilson, Alan Kirk, John Kloppenborg, Dan Smith, Mona Tokarek LaFosse, Wayne McCready, Peter W. Flint, Michael Johnson, Mark Leuchter, Peter Sabo, Ian Wilson, Michael Duggan, Francis Landy, Tony Burke, Daniel Miller, Shawn Flynn, James Magee, Matt Lowe, Steven Muir, Ryan Schellenberg, Alicia Batten, Colleen Shantz, Gregory Fewster, Christine Mitchell, Christiana de Groot, Esther Kobel, Jonathan Vroom, Lissa Wray Beal, Margaret Y. MacDonald, Adele Reinhartz, Keir Hammer, Carmen Palmer, Tyler Williams.

1. **Approval of the Agenda** (Christine Mitchell / Mark Leuchter, carried)
2. **Approval of the Minutes of the 2015 Annual General Meeting** (John Kloppenborg / Wayne McCready, carried)
3. **Business Arising**
No further items

4. President's Report (John L. McLaughlin)

1. The biannual Craigie Lecturer for next year at Ryerson will be Stanley Stowers of Brown University
2. Bob Derrenbacker and Richard Ascough have been appointed to the Endowment Committee, and our thanks to these members for volunteering to serve in this important area.

5. Vice President's Report (Willi Braun)

- Nominations for Executive Vacancies
 - Vice President: Christine Mitchell
 - Programme Coordinator: Anges Choi
 - Student Liaison: Peter Sabo
(Wayne McCready / Steve Wilson, carried)
- Annual book awards were presented, beginning with the recipient of the R. B. Y. Scott Award, Iain Provan, *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters* (Baylor University Press, 2014) – and the F. W. Beare Award, Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Power of Children: The Construction of Christian Families in the Greco-Roman World* (Baylor University Press, 2014).

6. Membership Secretary's Report and Approval of New Members (Alex Damm)

- A moment of silence was observed to honor the passing of two members this year, John Sandys-Wunsch and Dietmar Neufeld. The CSBS Student Travel Fund will be renamed in honour of Dietmar Neufeld, a past-president of our society. They are sadly missed and always in members' thoughts. *Requiescant in pace.*
- 19 new members have been nominated for this year's AGM (bringing the total above 130). Motion: Alex Damm / Willi Braun, carried.

7. Treasurer's Report (Alex Damm)

- Attached at the end of this document is the Treasurer's Report, distributed in hard copy at the meeting.
- Part of the general discussion included the issue of declining membership, with the suggestion that a survey be distributed to former/lapsed members as to why they did not renew, and perhaps provide insight about strengthening our base.
- Due to recent financial strains—although we are grateful for each and every membership renewal and donations, especially to the Neufeld Student Travel Fund—and the fact that fees have not been raised for some time, it is proposed that Congress fees be raised to 60 dollars (30 for students) and that membership fees be increased to 100 dollars for full members (50 for students).
- Motion to increase Congress fees.
(Alex Damm / Dan Smith, carried)
- Amended motion to increase Congress fees to 100 dollars for full members and 30 dollars for students.
(Peter Flint / Christine Mitchell, defeated)
- Motion to approve increased membership fees.
(Alex Damm / Colleen Shantz, carried)

8. Executive Secretary's Report (Keith Bodner)

- Encouragement for members to submit articles to *Studies in Religion*.

9. Communication Officer's Report (Paul Evans)

- If members change their contact details (e.g., email address), they should contact Paul in order to update their profile, or contact Paul with any news that can be shared about doctoral dissertations completed or books published
- The judges for the anonymous Book Awards were thanked for their service

10. Programme Coordinator's Report (Zeba Crook)

- Approximately 56 papers will be presented this year in Calgary, down from 69 last year in Ottawa. There are 34 Hebrew Bible/DSS papers and 22 NT/Apocrypha Christian Origins papers with 32 Student papers and 35 faculty papers. The Geographical Distribution: BC: 5, AB: 9, SK: 3, ON: 37, QC: 1, Atlantic Provinces: 1, Outside Canada: 11. As far as Seminars: Study of Religion has one year remaining; Politics in Prophetic Literature has two years remaining. There is also a Special Session Proposal on the Dead Sea Scrolls (Carmen Palmer)
- Zeba was then aggressively thanked for six years of remarkable service!

11. Student Liaison Officer's Report (Peter Sabo)

- The student lunch was a great success, and the student session panelists are especially thanked for their excellent presentations and discussion.

12. Endowment Fund Report (Wayne McCready)

- A brief update on the portfolio and the long-term strategy was provided.

13. Other business

- Publication report, Studies in Christianity and Judaism (Christine Mitchell on behalf of Terry Donaldson, series editor), Advancing Studies in Religion (Christine Mitchell, series editor)

The Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion signed an English-language series publication contract with McGill-Queen's University Press in January for two series: SCJ, which is primarily aimed at CSBS members;

and ASR, a more general series. SCJ continues the well-established ESCJ that was published by WLU Press, while ASR is a new series. A French-language contract has been signed with Presses de l'Universite de Montreal. The contract between CCSR and WLUP has been terminated, but the backlist is still available.

Two manuscripts are under consideration at SCJ:

Jenn Cianca, *Sacred Ritual, Profane Space: Roman Housing and Early Christian Meeting Places*

Mona LaFosse, *Appreciating Age: The Social Dynamics of Age Structure in Early Christianity*

Jenn has submitted the full manuscript; it will go out for ASPP review very soon. Mona has submitted a proposal, along with two chapters. The full manuscript will be submitted in the next little while.

One manuscript at ASR has been accepted by the press and has received ASPP funding. It is expected to be included in the Spring 2017 catalogue. This monograph is a narratological reading of one of the Suras of the Qur'an, drawing heavily on the approaches developed by biblical scholars.

Both series are eagerly seeking submissions – please note that publication is not contingent upon receiving ASPP funding, as the press seeks to publish all manuscripts approved by its Publications Committee. Please contact Terry Donaldson, Christine Mitchell or Kyla Madden (our editor at MQUP) with inquiries or proposals.

14. Adjournment (Paul Evans / Adele Reinhartz, carried)

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

August 31, 2016

(Unaudited -- See Notice to Reader)

Notice to Reader

Statement of Financial Position

Statement of Operations

Statement of Changes in Fund Balances

Statement of Cash Flows

Notes to the Financial Statements

Schedule of Restricted Funds

ROBERT W. R. BISHOP
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NOTICE TO READER

On the basis of information provided by management, I have compiled the statement of financial position of Canadian Society of Biblical Studies as at August 31, 2016 and the statements of operations, changes in fund balances and cash flows for the year then ended. I have not performed an audit or a review engagement in respect of these financial statements and, accordingly, I express no assurance thereon. Readers are cautioned that these statements may not be appropriate for their purposes.

“Robert W.R. Bishop”

October 6, 2016

CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANT

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL STUDIES**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**

As at August 31, 2016

(Unaudited -- See Notice to Reader)

	General Fund	Restricted Funds	ESCJ Fund	2016 Total	2015 Total
ASSETS					
Cash	\$ 19,238	\$ 2,576	\$ 16,707	\$ 38,521	\$ 24,153
Prepaid expenses	-	-	-	-	1,426
Accounts receivable	882	-	-	882	-
Investments	-	163,793	-	163,793	146,643
Funds held by CCSR (Note 4)	-	-	-	-	11,753
	<u>\$ 20,120</u>	<u>\$ 166,369</u>	<u>\$ 16,707</u>	<u>\$ 203,196</u>	<u>\$ 183,975</u>
LIABILITIES					
Accounts payable	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 104
Deferred revenue	882	-	-	882	-
	<u>882</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>882</u>	<u>104</u>
FUND BALANCES					
Unrestricted	19,238	-	-	19,238	23,812
Restricted	-	166,369	16,707	183,076	160,059
	<u>19,238</u>	<u>166,369</u>	<u>16,707</u>	<u>202,314</u>	<u>183,871</u>
	<u>\$ 20,120</u>	<u>\$ 166,369</u>	<u>\$ 16,707</u>	<u>\$ 203,196</u>	<u>\$ 183,975</u>

APPROVED BY THE BOARD:

Director_____
Director

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

For the Year Ended August 31, 2016

(Unaudited -- See Notice to Reader)

	General Fund		Restricted Funds		ESCJ Fund	
	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015
REVENUE						
Membership dues	\$ 11,783	\$ 13,333	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
CSBS dinner	3,022	2,900	-	-	-	-
Congress registration	1,225	1,130	-	-	-	-
Donations	-	-	5,632	6,590	-	-
Investment income (Note 3)	-	-	20,563	(9,810)	4,954	-
	16,030	17,363	26,195	(3,220)	4,954	-
EXPENSES						
Accounting and audit	5,230	5,178	-	-	-	-
Bank charges	86	77	-	-	-	-
Congress expenses	339	373	-	-	-	-
Craigie Lecture	-	-	2,312	2,161	-	-
CSBS dinner	4,181	3,621	-	-	-	-
Dues and memberships	1,867	2,197	-	-	-	-
Executive travel	4,172	2,576	-	-	-	-
Office, printing and postage	90	369	-	-	-	-
Student awards	-	-	1,500	2,000	-	-
Student travel	-	-	2,994	363	-	-
Subscriptions	4,835	4,991	-	-	-	-
Website	1,130	-	-	-	-	-
	21,930	19,382	6,806	4,524	-	-
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES						
	\$ (5,901)	\$ (2,019)	\$ 19,389	\$ (7,744)	\$ 4,954	\$ -

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL STUDIES**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES**

For the Year Ended August 31, 2016

(Unaudited -- See Notice to Reader)

	General Fund		Restricted Funds		ESCJ Fund	
	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015
BALANCE, OPENING	\$ 23,813	\$ 20,265	\$ 148,306	\$ 161,616	\$ 11,753	\$ 11,753
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	(5,901)	(2,019)	19,389	(7,744)	4,954	-
INTERFUND TRANSFERS	1,326	5,566	(1,326)	(5,566)	-	-
BALANCE, CLOSING	\$ 19,238	\$ 23,812	\$ 166,369	\$ 148,306	\$ 16,707	\$ 11,753

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL STUDIES**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS**

For the Year Ended August 31, 2016

(Unaudited -- See Notice to Reader)

	General Fund		Restricted Funds		ESCJ Fund	
	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015
CASH PROVIDED BY (USED FOR)						
OPERATIONS						
Excess of revenue over expenses	\$ (5,901)	\$ (2,019)	\$ 19,389	\$ (7,744)	\$ 4,954	\$ -
Unrealized change in market value (Note 3)	-	-	(16,998)	13,268	-	-
Changes in non-cash working capital:						
Prepaid expenses	1,426	(1,426)	-	-	-	-
Accounts receivable	(882)	757	-	-	-	-
Investments	-	-	(153)	(163)	-	-
Accounts payable	(104)	104	-	-	-	-
Deferred revenue	882	(757)	-	-	-	-
Interfund transfers	1,326	5,566	(1,326)	(5,566)	-	-
INVESTING						
Funds held by CCSR (Note 4)	-	-	-	-	11,753	-
	-	-	-	-	11,753	-
CHANGE IN CASH	(3,253)	2,225	913	(205)	16,707	-
CASH, OPENING	22,490	20,265	1,663	1,868	-	-
CASH, CLOSING	\$ 19,238	\$ 22,490	\$ 2,576	\$ 1,663	\$ 16,707	\$ -

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

August 31, 2016

(Unaudited -- See Notice to Reader)

1. PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Canadian Society of Biblical Studies is an unincorporated non-profit organization, the purpose of which is to stimulate the critical investigation of the classical biblical literatures, together with other related literature, by the exchange of scholarly research both in published form and in public forum.

The Society is a registered charity and is income tax exempt.

2. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

(a) Investments

Investments in marketable securities are carried at market value. Changes in market value are recognized in net income in the period incurred.

(b) Capital Assets

Capital assets are expensed in the year of acquisition.

3. INVESTMENT INCOME	2016	2015
Realized investment income	\$ 8,520	\$ 3,458
Unrealized change in market value of investments	16,998	(13,268)
Investment income	\$ 25,517	\$ (9,810)

4. FUNDS HELD BY CCSR

As at August 31, 2015, the amount of \$11,753 was held on behalf of the Society by the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion. During the year ended August 31, 2016, this amount was returned to the Society together with accumulated interest of \$4,954.

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

SCHEDULE OF RESTRICTED FUNDS

For the Year Ended August 31, 2016

(Unaudited -- See Notice to Reader)

	General Endowment	Student Travel	RBY Scott Award	N Wagner Award	Publication Fund
CAPITAL					
Balance, opening	\$ 36,879	\$ 5,970	\$ 20,843	\$ 10,321	\$ 3,846
Donations	2,500	2,632	-	-	-
Expenditures	-	(2,016)	-	-	-
Interfund transfers	-	-	-	-	-
Balance, closing	39,379	6,586	20,843	10,321	3,846
INCOME ON HAND					
Balance, opening	6,554	-	3,349	1,652	922
Investment income	5,938	978	3,246	1,607	599
Expenditures	-	(978)	(500)	-	-
Interfund transfers	(489)	-	(239)	(128)	(60)
Balance, closing	12,002	-	5,856	3,132	1,461
FUND BALANCE, CLOSING	\$ 51,381	\$ 6,586	\$ 26,699	\$ 13,453	\$ 5,307

	Beare Award	Craigie Lectureship	Founders' Prize	Jeremias Prize	Total
CAPITAL					
Balance, opening	\$ 13,197	\$ 18,252	\$ 10,067	\$ 10,863	\$ 130,238
Donations	-	500	-	-	5,632
Expenditures	-	-	-	-	(2,016)
Interfund transfers	-	-	-	-	-
Balance, closing	13,197	18,752	10,067	10,863	133,854
INCOME ON HAND					
Balance, opening	1,735	1,190	961	1,705	18,068
Investment income	2,055	2,881	1,568	1,692	20,563
Expenditures	(500)	(2,312)	(250)	(250)	(4,790)
Interfund transfers	(129)	(69)	(89)	(123)	(1,326)
Balance, closing	3,161	1,690	2,189	3,023	32,515
FUND BALANCE, CLOSING	\$ 16,358	\$ 20,442	\$ 12,256	\$ 13,886	\$ 166,369

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- _____. “Yahweh’s Consciousness: Isaiah 40–48 and Ancient Judean Historical Thought.” *Vetus Testamentum* 66 (2016): 646–61.
- Yoo, Philip Y. “Hagar the Egyptian: Wife, Handmaid, and Concubine.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78.2 (2016): 215–35.
- _____. “‘Armed for Battle?’ On the Meaning of חַמְשִׁים in Exodus 13,18.” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 128.1 (2016): 42–48.
- Zoccali, Christopher. “What’s the Problem with the Law? Jews, Gentiles, and Covenant Identity in Galatians 3:10–12.” *Neotestamentica* 49.2 (2015): 377–415.

Dissertations/Theses Completed

- Comber, Justin. *Torn Between Two Kingdoms: A Bakhtinian Reading of Characters in the Gospel of Mark*. Hamilton, ON, McMaster Divinity College.
- Parks, Sara. *Spiritual Equals: Women in the Q Gender Pairs*. Montreal, QC, McGill University.

Appointments, Promotions, Awards, Honours

- Ascough, Richard S. Frank Knox Award for Excellence in Teaching, Alma Mater Society, Queen’s University.
- Ben Zvi, Ehud. Professor Emeritus, History and Classics, University of Alberta.
- Chang, Don Dongshin. Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Northwest Baptist Seminary at Trinity Western University, Langley, BC; Junior Fellow of the *John William Wevers Institute for Septuagint Studies* at Trinity Western University.
- Eberhart, Christian. Chair, Department of Comparative Cultural Studies at University of Houston.

- Manfred Lautenschläger Award for Theological Promise,
Forschungszentrum Internationale und Interdisziplinäre
Theologie, University of Heidelberg.
- Milstein, Sara. Killam Faculty Research Fellowship, University of
British Columbia.
- Pummer, Reinhard. Medal for Academic Achievements in
Samaritan Studies, The Samaritan Medal Foundation.
- Thiessen, Matthew. Associate Professor of Religious Studies,
McMaster University.
- Webster, Jane. Teagle Foundation through the Interfaith Youth
Core, *Interfaith and Pre-Professional Curricular Grant* to
support the development of an Interfaith Studies minor and
interdisciplinary studies track at Barton College; Teagle
Foundation through the Interfaith Youth Core, *Curriculum
Development Grant* for course development of REL 336
Health Healing and Religion.
- Wilson, Ian D. Associate Director (Programs), Chester Ronning
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- Yoo, Philip Y. Jack Miller Postdoctoral Fellow in Religious
Thought, Thomas Jefferson Center for the Study of Core
Texts and Ideas, The University of Texas at Austin.

Research in Progress

- Ascough, Richard S. Christ Groups and Associations; Greek and
Roman Religions and the Book of Revelation; Christian
Origins and Ritual Studies
- Batten, Alicia. Commentary on the Letter of James; Dress in
Antiquity.
- Boda, Mark J. Isaiah; Psalms.
- Comber, Justin. Bakhtin and Pentecostal theology; Paraenesis and
social ideology in Second Temple apocalypses and James,
Peter, and Hebrews.
- Cox, Claude. SBL Commentary on the Septuagint: Job/Iob.
- Dallaire, Hélène. Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament:

- Joshua; *Devotionals from the Hebrew Bible*.
- McLaughlin, John L. "Moses in Ben Sira" *The Bible Today*;
"Wisdom Influence" *Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and
Wisdom Literature*; "Amos" *The Revised New Jerome
Biblical Commentary*.
- Middleton, J. Richard. The dynamics of divine and human power
in 1 Samuel 1–15; Suffering, silence, and lament in Job and
the Abraham story; Biblical theology (cosmic creation,
human uniqueness, evil, providence, incarnation,
eschatology) in relation to evolution.
- Milstein, Sara. "Making a Case: The Origins of Biblical and
Mesopotamian Law."
- Stovell, Beth M. *Minor Prophets I (Hosea-Micah): A
Commentary*. The Story of God Bible Commentary Series:
Old Testament; *Minor Prophets II (Nahum-Malachi): A
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