

Bálint Károly Zabán
The Pillar Function of the Speeches of Wisdom

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Bálint Károly Zabán

The Pillar Function of the Speeches of Wisdom

Proverbs 1:20–33, 8:1–36 and 9:1–6
in the Structural Framework of Proverbs 1–9

De Gruyter

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Sok szeretettel,
Izsák Félelmének
Emmának
Klárának
Édesanyámnak
megboldogult Édesapámnak
Nagymamámnak, megboldogult Nánássy Piroskának
Noéminek, Rúbennek, Szonjának és Sárának
Erdélynek és magyar népemnek
a Szentleányfalvi és Kisszántói Református Gyülekezetnek
és emlékül a bártfai és nagyszebeni Zabanius Sachs ab Harteneckeknek,
néhai dresdai szász dédnagymamámnak Theresia Hildegard Winklernek
néhai zsidó rokonaimnak
valamint a négy évet Berlinben búdosott dédnagytatámnak, néhai Nánássy
Dánielnek

ΣΩΜ # 4 M γ γ γ Θ Σ τ Η Σ Α Σ τ Σ

Foreword and Acknowledgments

During my ministerial studies in the Transsylvanian city of Kolozsvár, I often said in jest that a book, which lacks pictures, is not a good book. This present book of mine, which grew out of my PhD dissertation, does not encapsulate any pictures but still I do hope that the reader will find some interesting and captivating parts in it worth reading.

I can only hope that this book might become for some a source of valuable inspiration and incentive for further research. More importantly, may this book contribute to the quest of acquiring godly wisdom in the 21st century that is so desperately needed in all circles of human existence.

Most importantly however, I wish to express my indebtedness and candid gratitude to the following people, who in a variety of ways offered me invaluable help in the writing of my PhD thesis, which constitutes the basis of this book. Dr. James Williamson, who with great care and dedication, commented on my work and provided me with guidance and encouragement as the work progressed and reached its final stages. Professor J. Patton Taylor, who with great alacrity introduced me to the wonderful world of the Aramaic and Syriac languages, helped me to acquire German and French books and offered me valuable guidance in terms of the final stages of the writing up process. To the King's Pass District of the Hungarian Reformed Church, which provided me with the necessary study leave and to Langham Partnership, whose financial and spiritual support made my studies possible. To Csaba Balogh, W. Brueggemann, David W. Gooding, David Lamb, John McDowell, Tova Forti, Knut Heim, Howard Peskett, David Shepherd, Nili Shupak, Steven Williams, Christopher J. H. Wright, Zsigmond Major and Elek Előd Lőrincz, who helped me in a large variety of ways in terms of my work, offering their invaluable guidance and patient support.

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by J. B. Pritchard. Princeton, 1955
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
B.C.E.	Before the Common Era
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic</i> (ed. E. Rödiger; trans. Edward Robinson; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005)
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHA	Bibliotheca Hungarica Antiqua
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph
BibOr	Biblia et orientalia
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament. Edited by M. Noth and H. W. Wolff
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BOT	De Boeken van het Oude Testament
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
BTS	<i>Bible et terre sainte</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

<i>CaE</i>	<i>Cahiers Evangéliques</i>
CBC	Cambridge Biblical Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCBS	A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship
C.E.	Common Era
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare
Concilium	Concilium
Copt.	Coptic
COTTV	Commentary of the Old Testament in Ten Volumes
<i>DCH</i>	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . Edited by D. J. A. Clines. Sheffield, 1993 –
Dtn	Deuteronomic (history, writer)
Dtr	Deuteronomistic (history; writer); Deuteronomist
ed(s).	editor(s)
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
EH	Europäische Hochschulschriften
EIN	The German Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift
ELB	The German Elberfelder Bibel revidierte Fassung 1993
ELO	The German Darby Unrevidierte Elberfelder 1905
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> . 16 vols. Jerusalem, 1972
ESV	English Standard Version
EÜ	Einheitsübersetzung
Even-Shoshan	Even-Shoshan, A., ed. <i>A New Concordance of the Bible</i> . Jerusalem, 1996
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
<i>fam</i>	Familia
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
FBJ	French Bible de Jérusalem
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FThS	Freiburger theologische Studien
	Gender, Culture, Theory
GSC	A Geneva Series Commentary
h	Ms containing only one book

<i>HALOT</i>	Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Study Edition</i> . Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 2 vols. Leiden, 2001
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBIS	History of Biblical Interpretation Series
HC	The Holy Scriptures
HRD	<i>Die Bibel</i> 2005
<i>HSAT</i>	Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments. Edited by Franz Feldmann and Heinr. Herkenne. Bonn, 1923
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching.
<i>IBHS</i>	<i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor. Winona Lake, Indiana, 1990
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IVP	Intervarsity Press
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal asiatique</i>
<i>JANESCU</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
Jastrow	Jastrow, M. <i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature</i> . New York, 1975
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
Joüon	Joüon, P. <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> . Translated and revised by T. Muraoka. 2 vols. Subsidia Biblica 14/1-2. Rome, 2005
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KEHAT</i>	<i>Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , ed. O. F. Fridelin, Leipzig, 1812-96
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
KVHS	Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift
L	Targum Proverbs in Hagiographa Chaldaice (ed. P. De Lagarde)

	La Bible D'Alexandrie
LD	Lectio Divina
LEI	The Dutch Revised Leidse Vertaling (1912/1994)
LHB/OTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSG	The French Louis Segond Version 1910
LUÅ	Lunds universitets årsskrift
LUO	The German Luther Bibel 1912
LUT	The German Lutherbibel 1984
LUV	The Dutch Revised Lutherse Vertaling (1648/1750/1933/1994)
LXE	The English Translation of the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton 1844, 1851
LXX	Septuagint
L45	Luther 1545 German Bible
Midr.	Midrash
MM	Midrash Mishle
Ms	Manuscript
MT	Masoretic Text (of the OT)
NEG	The French Nouvelle Edition de Genève
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
n.	Footnote
NBG	The Dutch Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap Vertaling
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIV	New International Version
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OBS	Oxford Bible Series
ODGD	<i>The Oxford-Duden German Dictionary</i> . Edited by W. Scholze-Stubenrecht and J. B. Sykes. Oxford, 1994
OLMS	OLMS Paperbacks
OS	Oudtestamentsche Studien
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
PBM	Paternoster Biblical Monographs
PC	The Penguin Classics

<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i> <i>Renaissance Quarterly</i>
ROTC	Ritchie Old Testament Commentaries
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>RSz</i>	<i>Református Szemle</i>
SB	Sources bibliques
SC	Sacra Pagina
SCH	The German Schlachter Version 1951
<i>SEÅ</i>	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
<i>StudBib</i>	Studia Biblica
SBLCP	Society of Biblical Literature Centennial Publications
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SOTSM	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series Studies in Archaeology and History of the Levant Suppléments à Transeuphratène
SVV	The Dutch Statenvertaling 1637
Syr.	Syriac
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. Vols. Grand Rapids, 1974 –
TECC	Textos Y Estudios «Cardenal Cisneros» Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America
Tg(s).	Targum(s); Targumic The Biblical Resource Series
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
TOB	The French Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
trans.	translator, translated by
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
Vulg.	Vulgate
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Wordsworth Classics
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WS	Wuppertaler Studienbibel
<i>YJS</i>	<i>Yale Judaica Series</i> , New Haven
Z	The Zamora Aramaic Text of Proverbs
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Citation of Sources: Biblical Books are abbreviated according to *The SBL Handbook of Style*.

All sources consulted and mentioned in this work are listed in the Bibliography and/or the above list of abbreviations.

The English translations of various passages are listed. The translation of the three speeches of Wisdom is that of the present writer.

Books of the Holy Bible quoted without chapter and verse are spelled out both in the main text and in the footnotes. Books of the Holy Bible cited with chapter or chapter and verse are abbreviated, unless they come at the beginning of the sentence.

The Transliteration of the Hebrew Alphabet

Consonants			Vowels		
Character	Transliteration		Character	Transliteration	
א	'ālef	'	◌ֻ	<i>pattah</i>	<i>a</i>
ב	<i>bêt</i>	<i>B</i>	◌ֹ	furtive <i>pattah</i>	<i>a</i>
ג	<i>gîmel</i>	<i>G</i>	◌ֶ	<i>qāmeṣ</i>	<i>ā</i>
ד	<i>dālet</i>	<i>D</i>	◌ֻּ	final <i>qāmeṣ hê</i>	<i>â</i>
ה	<i>hê</i>	<i>H</i>	◌ֻּׁ	3d masc. sg. suf.	<i>āyw</i>
ו	<i>wāw</i>	<i>W</i>	◌ֶּ	<i>sêgōl</i>	<i>e</i>
ז	<i>zayin</i>	<i>Z</i>	◌ֶֹ	<i>ṣērê</i>	<i>ē</i>
ח	<i>hêt</i>	<i>ḥ</i>	◌ֶֹׁ	<i>ṣērê yôd</i>	<i>ê</i> (◌ֶֹ = <i>êy</i>)
ט	<i>ṭêt</i>	<i>ṭ</i>	◌ֶֹּׁ	<i>sêgōl yôd</i>	<i>ê</i> (◌ֶֹ = <i>êy</i>)
י	<i>yôd</i>	<i>Y</i>	◌ֶֹֹׁ	short <i>ḥîreq</i>	<i>i</i>
כ	<i>kāp</i>	<i>K</i>	◌ֶֹֹׁׁ	long <i>ḥîreq</i>	<i>î</i>
ל	<i>lāmed</i>	<i>L</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹׁׁ	<i>ḥîreq yôd</i>	<i>î</i> (◌ֶֹ = <i>îy</i>)
מ	<i>mêm</i>	<i>M</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹׁׁׁ	<i>qāmeṣ ḥāṭṭip</i>	<i>o</i>
נ	<i>nûn</i>	<i>N</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹֹׁׁׁ	<i>ḥōlem</i>	<i>ō</i>
ס	<i>sāmek</i>	<i>S</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹֹׁׁׁׁ	full <i>ḥōlem</i>	<i>ó</i>
ע	'ayin	'	◌ֶֹֹֹֹֹׁׁׁׁ	short <i>qibbûṣ</i>	<i>u</i>
פ	<i>pê</i>	<i>P</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹֹֹׁׁׁׁׁ	long <i>qibbûṣ</i>	<i>û</i>
צ	<i>ṣādê</i>	<i>ṣ</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹֹֹֹׁׁׁׁׁ	<i>śûreq</i>	<i>û</i>
ק	<i>qôp</i>	<i>Q</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹֹֹֹׁׁׁׁׁׁ	<i>ḥāṭṭep.qāmeṣ</i>	<i>õ</i>
ר	<i>rêš</i>	<i>R</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹֹֹֹֹׁׁׁׁׁׁ	<i>ḥāṭṭep pattah</i>	<i>ã</i>
שׁ	<i>śîn</i>	<i>Ś</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹֹֹֹֹׁׁׁׁׁׁׁ	<i>ḥāṭṭep sêgōl</i>	<i>ě</i>
שׂ	<i>śîn</i>	<i>Š</i>	◌ֶֹֹֹֹֹֹֹֹׁׁׁׁׁׁׁ	<i>šewā'</i>	<i>ě</i>
ת	<i>tāw</i>	<i>T</i>			

Introduction

The present work provides a treatment of Proverbs 1:20-33; 8:1-36 and 9:1-6, generally called the three speeches of Wisdom. These speeches of Wisdom are starting points from which the remaining material in Prov 1-9 is examined, evaluated and interpreted. Some scholars, from a diachronic perspective, surmised that the three speeches of personified Wisdom, along with other wisdom poems (3:13-20; 6:1-19; 9:7-18) interrupt the sequence of ten instructions that are to be encountered in Prov 1-9. Therefore, they are part of a batch of later expansions added to the existing ten instructions. Other scholars, from a synchronic stance, deemed that it is possible to offer a more positive appraisal of the three speeches of Wisdom in relation to each other and the remainder of Prov 1-9.

Therefore, without denying the validity of both perspectives, a more positive appraisal of these speeches necessitates a twofold process: firstly, the examination of the relationship of the three speeches of Wisdom with each other and secondly, the examination of the relationship of the three speeches of Wisdom with the remainder of Prov 1-9, e.g. the ten instructions.

First of all, the relationship between the three speeches is expanded especially in the close reading chapters, in which detailed analyses of the existing poetic structures are provided. This relationship between the speeches is also examined from the perspective of their *Gattung* definition. The affinities between the speeches of Wisdom and the ten instructions of Prov 1-9, may point towards viewing the speeches as a component *Gattung*, called *instruction by Wisdom* within a framing *Gattung*, called *parental wisdom instruction*. In terms of their overall focus and message, the speeches reflect careful and cohesive crafting, especially considering the tripartite formula of gradation, enticement and desirability, cementing the view, that despite variations, they exhibit an overarching unity.

Secondly, the examination of the relationship between the speeches of Wisdom and the remainder of Prov 1-9, suggests that the ancient near eastern wisdom concept of house building and house filling and such imageries in the speeches and the remainder of Prov 1-9 as the path, house and treasure imageries, function as cohesive and unifying elements in the overall poetic structure of Prov 1-9. All these features offer the conclusion that the three speeches of Wisdom, in relation to each other and the rest of the material, exhibit the emphatic signs of a successful literary composition, even if various stages of redaction are

accepted in the process of the literary editing of Prov 1-9. Therefore, they function as framing pillars in the house of Wisdom that is, the poetic structure of Prov 1-9 as a whole.

Employed Methodology

One should employ methods in the exegetical examination of a Hebrew Bible text on the basis of the requirements of the text.¹ This of course necessitates a process of trial and error, which, in due course, will yield beneficial fruits. Painstaking work is necessary to discover which method suits best the text. Scholarship has proved that *forcing* certain methods on biblical texts might offer ill fitted results and bring one to the conclusion that one specific method employed solely may not be the best path to take. It has often been pointed out that the full-blown application of one exegetical method may not proffer the expected results.² A multiplicity of methods allows the dynamics between various methods to be at work. In this present work I employ different exegetical methods such as form, redaction, rhetorical and literary criticism (R. Alter etc.). The usage of these methods is in conformity with the most recent developments in modern scholarship and with current approaches in Proverbs research.

It is a known fact that redaction criticism in terms of its importance replaced form criticism in Germany, whereas in North America the latter is appraised more positively.³ So as much as redaction criticism has become one of

1 In this book, the term *method* is favoured as opposed to *approach*. In order to maintain precision, the term *approach* is used only when a particular scholar referred to it. R. Meynet, on the lines of the parameters set out by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, differentiated between *methods* and *approaches*. Cf. Roland Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis: An Introduction to Biblical Rhetoric* (JSOTS; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 21. On a different note, it is important to mention that in this work the terminology outlined by Wilfred G. E. Watson's *Classical Hebrew Poetry* is employed in relation to various terms, such as hemistich, colon etc. of poetic texts, see Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry* (JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 11-5.

2 John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Methodology* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1989), 133-6.

3 Martin Rösel, "Inscriptional Evidence and the Question of Genre," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (eds. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 107-8. Rösel gave three main reasons for the demise of form criticism in Germany. The first reason is the unreliable *cult-historical method*, which commenced with the work of S. Mowinckel. Scholars averred that it is impossible to reconstruct a cultic *Sitz Im Leben* for Hebrew Bible texts. The second reason is reflected by the way scholars came to realize the strain between idealized forms, in the German sense of the word *Gattung*, and individual texts. The third reason is the change of interest from pre-literary oral phases of texts to their literary evolution.

the most prominent methods in Europe (especially in Germany, Holland, Hungary, Transsylvania, etc.), form criticism through its interactions with other methods such as rhetorical criticism still maintains itself as a valuable method in the area of Biblical scholarship, especially in North America.⁴ Therefore, I make some use of form criticism in terms of questions of genre or more precisely whether the speeches of Wisdom may be viewed as part of the wisdom instruction *Gattung* or not.⁵ The employment of form criticism is based on the eclectic research presented in the volume entitled *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*. As far as redaction criticism is concerned, I follow the results of the works of A. Meinhold, R. Schäffer, G. Baumann and A. Müller. At some points, I also allude to traditio-historical criticism, which method underlies the background of some of the redaction critical results of Baumann and Müller too. With respect to literary criticism heralded by Alter, I also employed indispensable studies of Hebrew poetry by such scholars as Watson, J. L. Kugel,⁶ A. Berlin,⁷ Alter,⁸ A. Schökel,⁹ and more recently that of N. P. Lunn.¹⁰

Finally, throughout this book, without actually referring to it *mot à mot* in every instance, I made great use of D. A. Carson's book, entitled *Exegetical Fallacies*.¹¹ Albeit this book focuses more on matters concerning the New Testament, still it proved to be invaluable in terms of helping me properly decipher not only the text of the Hebrew Bible but also the views of other scholars. When one reads the works written by other scholars, then it is very easy to make assumptions about their writings and then disagree with them. One has to be very careful in the process of evaluation and interpretation of the

4 Cf. Won Lee, "The Exclusion of Moses from the Promised Land: A Conceptual Approach," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism*, 218. According to Lee, form criticism underwent so many changes during the past decades that one wonders whether Hermann Gunkel's form criticism is still sustainable or not.

5 On the basis of the cautionary remarks of Barton, I consistently employ the German terms *Gattung* and *Form* and not the alleged English equivalents of these terms, namely *genre* and *form*. Cf. J. Barton, "Form Criticism," *ABD*, Vol. 2, 839.

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

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

8 Alter, *Art*.

9 Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (SB 11; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000).

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

11 D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1996).

writings of others. It can easily happen that one deducts such conclusions, which were not even stated by the writer of the written material. Nonetheless, the conclusion is made anyway.¹² Moreover, in some cases, they are presented in such a fashion as if they would have been the conclusions of the author, who was criticized two seconds ago. Thus, Carson's book was a great asset in the attempt to avoid such mistakes.

12 Cf. Johnny E. Miles, *Wise King – Royal Fool: Semiotics, Satire and Proverbs 1-9* (London: T & T Clark International A Continuum imprint, 2004), 16 n. 4; Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 15. Miles stated that: "Adele Berlin describes poetics as 'the building-blocks of literature.' Yet her explanation of poetics assumes the analogy that as linguistics is to language so poetics is to literature." However, Berlin said the following: "The study of narrative, or narratology, is a subdivision of poetics. Poetics, the science of literature, is not an interpretative effort – it does not aim to elicit meaning from a text. Rather it aims to find the building blocks of literature and the rules by which they are assembled. In order to explain poetics as a discipline, a linguistic model is frequently offered: poetics is to literature as linguistics is to language." As the above quotation shows, Berlin did not *describe* poetics as *the building-blocks of literature*. She simply talked about the *aims* of poetics as being the finding of the building blocks of literature. It is a slight difference but important.

1. A Survey of Research Concerned with the Structural Framework of Proverbs 1-9

1.1 The Structure and Character of Proverbs 1-9

1.1.1 Franz Delitzsch and Patrick W. Skehan

The first Hebrew superscription of the book in question in the Hebrew Bible is מְשֻׁלֵּי שְׁלֹמֹה, *Proverbs of Solomon, le titre global*,¹ being part of the כְּתוּבִים section of the Hebrew canon.² This provided the actual name of the book as a whole, confirmed by the same titles of the ancient versions, מְחֻלֵּי דְשְׁלֹמֹה in the Targum, ܡܠܟܝܐ ܕܫܠܡܝܐ in the Peshitta and παροιμίαι Σαλωμώντος in the LXX.³

Scholars of the latter half of the 19th century have already recognized the fact that on the basis of certain variations in the style and at a certain degree in the character and intention, Prov 1-9 constitutes a somewhat different section when compared with the remainder of the book of Proverbs (10:1ff). The most important commentaries published in the 18th and 19th centuries were the ones written by E. Bertheau,⁴ C. Bridges,⁵ T. K. Cheyne,⁶ E. Elster,⁷ H. Ewald,⁸ W. Frankenberg,⁹ F. Hitzig,¹⁰ A. Kamphausen,¹¹ J. D. Michaelis,¹² A. Schultens,¹³

1 Hilaire Duesberg, *Les Scribes Inspirés: Introduction aux Livres Sapientiaux de la Bible. Le Livre des Proverbes* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938), 233.

2 In the ensuing treatment, I consistently employ the term *Hebrew Bible* instead of Old Testament, out of the conviction that one is dealing primarily with the holy writings of the Jewish community of faith. Therefore, by this usage I simply intend to do justice to the fact that this book should be treated first and foremost as the sacred book of the Jewish community of faith and secondarily as part of the Christian canon of Holy Scriptures.

3 Hermann Wiesmann, *Das Buch der Sprüche*, VI. Band, 1. Abteilung (*HSAT*; Bonn: Verlag von Peter Hanstein, 1923), 1.

4 E. Bertheau, *Die Sprüche Salomo's* (KEH, 7. Lieferung; Leipzig: 1847), V-112.

5 C. Bridges, *An Exposition of the Book of Proverbs Second Edition* (London: 1847).

6 T. K. Cheyne, *Job and Solomon or The Wisdom of the Old Testament* (London: 1887).

7 E. Elster, *Commentar über die Salomonischen Sprüche* (Göttingen: 1858).

8 H. Ewald, *Die Dichter des Alten Bundes II: Die Salomonischen Schriften* (Göttingen: 1867).

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

10 F. Hitzig, *Die Sprüche Salomos* (Zürich: 1858).

Hermann Ludwig Strack,¹⁴ C. H. Toy,¹⁵ and G. Wildeboer.¹⁶ The widespread opinion was that chapters 1-9 constitute a prologue to the book of Proverbs. Accordingly, this prologue was thought to be the latest part of Proverbs that furnishes a particular didactic tone to the entire book presenting it as a textbook for the parental instructions concerned with the education of the youth in a process of acquisition of wisdom and virtue.

In terms of the stylistic resemblances of Prov 1-9 and other parts of the book, Delitzsch noted the similarities between chapters 1-9 and 22:17-24:22.¹⁷ Again Delitzsch tackled the structure of Prov 1-9 as a unified composition of fifteen *Maschallieder* (*maschal songs*) or *Lehrdichtungen* (*didactic poems*), in which the three speeches of Wisdom were also included.¹⁸ I shall return to the importance of the three speeches as *Maschallieder*, in the overall composition of Prov 1-9 envisaged by Delitzsch, in chapter six entitled *The Gattung Definition of the Three Speeches of Personified Wisdom*.

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- 11 A. Kamphausen, "Die Sprüche," in *Vollständiges Bibelwerk für die Gemeinde. In drei Abtheilungen. Von Christian Carl Josias Bunsen. Erste Abtheilung: Die Bibel. Übersetzung und Erklärung, Dritter Theil: Die Schriften* (Leipzig: 1868), 281-394.
 - 12 J. D. Michaelis, *Deutsche Übersetzung des Alten Testaments mit Anmerkungen für Ungelehrte. Die siebente Theil, welcher die Sprüche und den Prediger Salomons enthält* (Göttingen: 1778).
 - 13 A. Schultens, *Proverbia Salomonis. Versionem integram ad hebraerum fontem expressit, atque commentarium adjecit Albertus Schultens* (Lugduni Batavorum [Leiden]: 1748).
 - 14 Hermann Ludwig Strack, *Die Sprüche Salomos* (Kurzgefaßter Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments ... , hg. Von H. L. Strack und O. Zöckler, A. Alten Testament. 6. Abteilung, 2. Hälfte; München: 1899).
 - 15 Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Proverbs* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1899). For further commentaries written in the twentieth century, see further W. Gunther Plaut, *Book of Proverbs: A Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1941); A. Cohen, *Proverbs: Hebrew Text & English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* (Hindhead: The Soncino Press, 1945); Julius H. Greenstone, *Proverbs with Commentary* (HC; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950).
 - 16 G. Wildeboer, *Die Sprüche* (KHC, Abteilung XV; Freiburg i.B./Leipzig/Tübingen: 1897). C.f. M. Geier, *Proverbia regum sapientissimi Salomonis cum cura enucleata* (Leipzig: 1653); *Commentaria in Proverbia et Ecclesiasten Salomonis* ... (Amsterdam: 1696).
 - 17 R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study* (HBIS 1; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 62. C.f. F. Delitzsch, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon* (COT 6; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 23, 36, 95. For a further survey of the main points of discussion in Prov 1-9, see further James D. Martin, *Proverbs* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 33-50. For a more general survey of Proverbs scholarship in the 1990s, see further Knut Holter, "Old Testament Proverbs Studies in the 1990s," Newsletter of African Old Testament Scholarship 6 (1999).
 - 18 Whybray, *Survey*, 62; Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 12; Otto Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)* (BKAT 17; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 3.

Nevertheless, as S. Weeks rightly pointed out: “What is odd must also be regarded as suspicious...,”¹⁹ and thus it is not a shock that most modern commentators cast doubt upon the basic unity of Prov 1-9. This section of Proverbs was and in some shape or form is still viewed as a series of brief instructional presentations, to which have been added other materials, such as the speeches of personified Wisdom. Many commentators explained the relationship between the instructional presentations with the term *anthology* or *collection*, as opposed to a distinct composition. However, even amongst the scholars who propagate these terms in relation to Prov 1-9, there seems to be discordance about the nature and extent of the redactional activity on the part of the redactor(s), editor(s) and/or anthologist(s).²⁰ Weeks summarized succinctly the three prongs of the debate. The first is the well-accepted fact that Prov 1-9 is separated into different parts by the reiterated *parental appeals*, in which the pupil, addressed directly, is admonished to hearken to the instruction. Besides minor disagreements about the identification and boundary of certain appeals, the questions raised by this have connection with the second prong, the nature and inter-relationship of the particular sections discerned in this fashion. In this case, stipulations about *Form* and *Gattung* come into play, and it is commonly claimed or assumed that the instruction *Gattung* impinges upon the examiner to comprehend the sections in this distinct way. The third somewhat different prong is concerned with the unity or disunity in the thought of the work, often with a specific look at the modes in which wisdom is conceived or presented. On the grounds of this, it is frequently argued that the sections of the work, whatever their original relationship, have been supplemented with material that diverges in its outlook, perhaps because it underwent a lengthy process of transmission and adaptation.²¹

Scholarship has more or less departed from a presumption that texts are composite until shown innocent but it is still acceptable to propose that unusual complexity may have stemmed from redactional activity rather than compositional endeavour. Weeks underscored that it would be exceedingly hard to question that Prov 1-9 has undergone at least some supplementation and textual corruption. In the process of the examination of the relevance and meaning of this text, sometimes there appears to be a major gap between viewing it as a single composition, to which slight changes have been made, and taking it to be entirely the disjointed opus of sundry hands.²²

Nonetheless, there have been some attempts to eradicate the abovementioned gap. For instance, following Delitzsch, it was Skehan who offered the

19 Stuart Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1-9* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 44. See further my review of this book in *RSz* 101/6 (2008): 728-30.

20 Weeks, *Proverbs 1-9*, 44-5.

21 Weeks, *Proverbs 1-9*, 45.

22 Weeks, *Proverbs 1-9*, 45-6.

next major treatment of the three speeches of Wisdom in terms of their relevance in the overall structural composition of Prov 1-9. He defined the structure of Prov 1-9 in architectural terms.²³ Skehan based the starting point of his examination on the statement of Prov 9:1: "Wisdom has built her house." Thus, he suggested that Wisdom's house is the structure of Prov 1-9. The *seven columns* of Wisdom's house are actually the seven poems encountered in Prov 2-7, whereas chapters 1 and 8-9, the three speeches of Wisdom, the *Zwischenstück* and the speech of Folly, build a framework around the whole work. This hypothesis, in which one is not sure how much, is metaphor and how much is meant to be construed literally, has been embraced in some shape or form in a few studies.²⁴ I shall examine in detail some of Skehan's claims in the following chapter, since after Delitzsch it was Skehan who placed a great importance on the relevance and function of chapters 1, 8 and 9 in the structure of Proverbs.

1.1.2 Claudia V. Camp

Another major work, which attempted to establish a compositional framework for Prov 1-9 as a whole, was that of Camp. As much as Camp's first book on Proverbs was concerned with the origins of the figure of Wisdom,²⁵ it also tackled questions of structure, metaphor, imagery, stylistic and thematic shaping, redaction process etc. She accepted and furthered the view according to which chapters 1-9 and 31 are placed editorially in order to form a framework to the book of Proverbs. Moreover, the female imagery, including not only Wisdom but also the Strange Woman and the Woman of Valour in Prov 31, is presented to furnish a compositional framework, turning the segregated body of collected proverbs into a literary work with its own integrity. In another article, she dilated her theory of personified Wisdom as a literary metaphor proffering a more detailed presentation of its importance for theology.²⁶ As I said, she made a good case by mentioning and even expanding on occasions, the metaphors and imageries listed. Many times the dilated metaphors and

23 Patrick W. Skehan, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom* (CBQM 1; Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1971).

24 Whybray, *Survey*, 63.

25 Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985). Cf. Gerlinde Baumann, *Die Weisheitsgestalt in Proverbien 1-9: Traditionsgeschichtliche und theologische Studien* (FAT 16; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996), 34-5.

26 C. V. Camp, "Woman Wisdom as Root Metaphor: A Theological Consideration," in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honour of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm.* (JSOTSup 58; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 45-76.

imageries were even successfully connected to the framing female imagery. Nevertheless, perhaps sometimes some of these metaphors and imageries, although connected to the framing female imagery, have a life of their own. By which I mean that without denying the linkage, they also need to be seen, examined and highlighted on their own and not in juxtaposition to the framing female imagery. That is why in chapter seven I attempted to present, examine and highlight especially imageries, which might have the same framing function as the female imagery. These imageries need to be tackled with respect to the linkages established and with respect to their sort of semi-independent existence.

1.1.3 Roland E. Murphy

In the history of Proverbs scholarship, most scholars agreed about the existence of a redaction process to which this Hebrew Bible book was subjected. However, not all scholars tallied about the nature of this work, which was a result of a redaction process. Some scholars argued that the outcome might be labelled as a composition, while others deemed that it might be docketed as a collection. Murphy, for instance, approached Prov 1-9 as a *collection of collections*,²⁷ which is introduced by a preface. By this he assented with the *unproven but likely assumption*²⁸ that during the post-exilic era chapters 1-9 *set the tone*²⁹ for the predominantly pre-exilic collections in chapters 10-31. He also succeeded in ascribing a more elevated role to the speeches of Wisdom in the overall structure of the *collection of collections*.³⁰

I have mentioned only a few examples. However, without continuing the long list of scholars and the critical presentation of their works, it is feasible to say that from Delitzsch onwards, other scholars also have attempted to offer viable solutions for the structural problems that occur in Prov 1-9 and in the book of Proverbs as a whole. The abovementioned solutions were offered on various grounds depending on the method and/or approach employed in the relevant studies, such as form, redaction and rhetorical criticism, linguistics etc. On the basis of the results of these treatments one thing may be stated with a great degree of surety, namely that the various parts of Prov 1-9, in certain aspects, do cohere with each other, forming not only a mere collection but also a redoubtable introduction for Proverbs as a whole.

27 Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs* (WBC 22; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), xix.

28 Murphy, *Proverbs*, xix.

29 Murphy, *Proverbs*, xx.

30 Murphy, *Proverbs*, xix.

1.2 The Parental Instructions and the Speeches of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9

1.2.1 R. Norman Whybray

In general, the material in Prov 1-9 has been divided into two main groups, namely the parental appeals addressed to the son or pupil on one hand and the self-glorifying speeches of Wisdom on the other. Both groupings are preceded by the preamble in 1:1-7. Whybray's attempt was to proffer a viable explanation for all this material within a *definite structure*.³¹ He employed literary criticism and form criticism alike, on the basis of which he recognized the presence of ten *discourses* of roughly the same form and length uttered by the teacher. Each discourse retains its separate introduction calling on the pupil to hear and obey the father's teaching, followed by a main section and frequently by a clear conclusion. Whybray's deduction was that despite the fact that these parental appeals have features, which indicate their specifically Israelite character, they were, not only in form but also to a large degree even in context, grounded on the tradition of the Egyptian instructions, stemming from a similar educational setting. Whybray's theory was that the majority of these discourses had been abridged at a later stage by interpolated or appended material. Some of this later material or *expansions* were *scraps of additional teaching* many times resembling the material encountered in the sentence literature of Proverbs. Apparently, these expansions were interpolated without any particular *Tendenz* and they were distinguishable from the original discourses. Further *extensive additions* have also been inserted in two stages for *particular purposes*. The first group of such extensive additions was preoccupied with the augmentation of the authority and persuasiveness of the teacher by upholding that his teaching was not only a mere outcome of ordinary human experience.³² This augmentation is highlighted by the creation of the figure of personified Wisdom presented either in full or partial personification as a female character who furnishes *life*, that is, wealth and success, to the pupil. The pupil was expected to *embrace* this Wisdom as a bride. The second stage of extensive additions was apparently of a theological nature. These additions claimed that Wisdom was an attribute of God himself. The life offered by Wisdom was God's gift and became accessible through the fear of God, which

31 Whybray, *Survey*, 63-4; R. N. Whybray, *The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs I-IX* (PhD diss., Oxford, 1962); R. N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9* (SBT 45; London: SCM Press, 1965). C.f. Camp, *Proverbs*, 41-3; R. N. Whybray, "Some Literary Problems in Proverbs I-IX," *VT* 16 (1966): 482-96; Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 251-2.

32 Whybray, *Survey*, 64. In relation to the authority of the second speech of Wisdom in Prov 8:1-36, see further Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 111.

was considered the *essence of Wisdom*. The three speeches of Wisdom in 1:20-33; 8:1-36 and 9:1-6 constitute the leading part of these additions. Whybray's theory was that these speeches were also the result of a twofold stage, the second of which affirms the existing proximity between Wisdom and God.³³

Interestingly, Whybray in his work published in 1994³⁴ had taken up again the questions pertaining to the structure and character of chapters 1-9. In ensemble, he conformed to his previous statements³⁵ but supplemented these with further *refinements* and *precisions* dropping the idea of a *direct* dependence of these instructions on Egyptian counterparts. Building on the works of earlier scholars such as Camp,³⁶ T. P. McCreesh³⁷ and A. Meinhold,³⁸ he accepted the view according to which Prov 1-9 and 31:10-31, chapters preoccupied with opposing female figures, are the result of a deliberate editorial planning in order to build a framework for the entire Book of Proverbs.³⁹ One cannot but marvel at the way in which Whybray altered some of his earlier views in relation to chapters 1-9. However, his final treatment published in 1994 still lacks a great deal of awareness in terms of genre studies and formal characters of instructions. The literary and thematic point of views, to which he sometimes appealed are hardly reflections of such awareness in the treatment of the various passages.⁴⁰ In conclusion, it is fair to say with Baumann that regarding his opinion about the composition of Prov 1-9, Whybray still remained *rather resignate*.⁴¹

1.2.2 Christa Bauer-Kayatz

Independently from Whybray, Kayatz reached similar results in that the discourses or *units* of instruction of Prov 1-9 were prepossessed in *Form* and to a large degree in theme by the genre of the Egyptian instruction.⁴² Whybray

33 Whybray, *Survey*, 64.

34 R. N. Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (JSOTS 168; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

35 Whybray, *Wisdom*.

36 Camp, *Wisdom*.

37 T. P. McCreesh, "Wisdom as Wife: Proverbs 31:10-31," *RB* 92 (1985): 25-46.

38 Arndt Meinhold, *Die Sprüche: Teil 1: Sprüche Kapitel 1-15* (ZBAT 16.1; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1991), 56.

39 Whybray, *Survey*, 70.

40 C.f. Whybray, *Composition*, 40.

41 Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 251.

42 C. Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9: Eine Form- und Motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter Einbeziehung Ägyptischen Vergleichsmaterials* (WMANT 22; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1966). C.f. Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduc-*

deemed that although Kayatz furnished an extensive analysis of the genre of the Egyptian instruction, she failed to offer a detailed form critical examination of the instruction encountered in Prov 1-9.⁴³ As much as this final point may be true at a certain degree, I want to stress the fact that the brevity of Kayatz's form critical treatment of the instructions of Prov 1-9 does not take away from the important results she offered. As subsequent studies show, Kayatz, as opposed to the rigid genre definitions of Whybray, offered a more informed study of the instruction genre in Prov 1-9 on which more recent studies of the same topic can build more easily than on the results of Whybray's form critical examination. Kayatz's aim was not only to point out the affinities between Israelite and Egyptian instructions but the variations as well. As opposed to other views in this matter, Kayatz, in accordance with Gerhard Von Rad, underscored that the instructional material in Prov 1-9 is a relatively early composition, possibly a literary unit, and emphasized with Von Rad the importance of Solomon's links with Egypt. Egyptian influence was also detected in Prov 8, especially 8:22-31, where the figure of Wisdom resembles that of the Egyptian Maat. However, this influence stemmed from another source. Wisdom's speech in chapter 8 retains affinities with the self-glorifying *I* speeches of Egyptian gods, in form and content alike. Maat however, utters no such speeches in the Egyptian texts. In terms of Wisdom's first speech in 1:20-33, Kayatz established no Egyptian connections, concluding that this speech betrays the prepossession of the teaching of the Israelite prophets.⁴⁴

1.2.3 Bernhard Lang

A new hypothesis about chapters 1-9 and particularly the triumvirate of *didactic poems* (*Lehrgedichten*) was mooted by Lang in a sequel of writings published between 1972 and 1986.⁴⁵ In terms of chapters 1-7, in which Wisdom is not the speaker but the human teacher, Lang viewed the ten didactic poems as a sequence of unrelated though similar teachers' lessons of different authorship. These were amalgamated without any specific plan or unity of style,

tion and Commentary (AB 18A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 335-6; Camp, *Wisdom*, 29-34; Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 17, 22, 24.

43 Whybray, *Survey*, 64.

44 Whybray, *Survey*, 64-5.

45 B. Lang, *Die weisheitliche Lehrrede: Eine Untersuchung von Sprüche 1-7* (SB 54; Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1972); *Anweisungen gegen die Torheit: Sprichwörter – Jesus Sirach* (SKKAT 19; Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1973); *Frau Weisheit: Deutung einer biblischen Gestalt* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1975). The English translation of the latter work is *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1986). Cf. Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 18-19, 22, 24, 32-4, 251-2, 254, 262-3, 266.

although they retained resembling introductory sections in which the teacher pleaded for the attention of the student. These lessons were also comparable to Egyptian school texts, which were also devoid of a clear structure. Lang's opinion was that this type of literature was textually fluid, subject to alterations and expansions, but in opposition to Whybray, he reckoned that it was not possible to reach a conclusion as to where any of the original *Lehrrede* of Prov 1-7 would have ended. The determination of their *Sitz im Leben* also constituted a difficult matter.⁴⁶ In terms of the character of the three speeches of Wisdom (1:20-33; 8:1-36 and 9:1-6) Lang postulated that they varied from the *Lehrrede* of chapter 1-7 and were the upshots of scribal schools, as highlighted by their superb poetical quality. The scribal schools he was thinking about were not necessarily linked to the court, the setting in which Wisdom is portrayed as giving her speech in 1:20-21; 8:1-3 and 9:3, also inferring that the city gate or the market square might have been the venue where these schools functioned. The quality that these didactic poems retain betrays the fact that the purview of their teaching was not merely utilitarian since they betray a great deal of preoccupation with broader matters such as the nature of Wisdom, her rule in the world and her relationship to God as the creator of the world.⁴⁷ In his monograph published in 1986, he asserted that Prov 8 was initially composed as a poem of self-extolment of an Israelite goddess but was concomitantly altered in order to conform to a more chiselled Yahwism.⁴⁸

1.2.4 Philip J. Nel

Finally, Nel's study on the structure and ethos of the wisdom admonitions in Proverbs filled a hiatus in this area of the study of the book.⁴⁹ Moreover, his treatment also contributed to the gaining of some valuable insights about the three speeches of personified Wisdom with respect to their relationship with the rest of the book of Proverbs. Wisdom's first speech for instance (1:20-33) is regarded as a *complex structure*. In terms of the ethos of wisdom, he examined such questions as the role and function of the motivation, the authority encountered in the wisdom motivations and amongst others a very plausible treatment of the concept of the fear of the Lord. In this latter examination, he

46 Whybray, *Survey*, 66-7.

47 Whybray, *Survey*, 67.

48 Whybray, *Survey*, 67.

49 Philip Johannes Nel, *The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs* (BZAW 158; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982).

questioned the long-held view according to which early Israelite wisdom was purely secular in its nature.⁵⁰

The above presented four studies have yielded some successful results in terms of the understanding of the relationship between the parental instructions and the speeches of Wisdom. In the case of some works, one has the impression that this relationship is construed only with respect to its diachronic aspects (Lang), which is of course very important. Nevertheless, one might also wonder whether the synchronic aspects of this relationship were not pointed out with the same alacrity and importance because of the methods and/or approaches that were employed. Furthermore, in the treatment of the various passages the literary and thematic point of views to which some scholars sometimes appealed to (Whybray) are hardly reflections of awareness of the more recent genre studies or of the formal characters of instructions.

1.3 Summary and Appraisal

As it can be seen, scholarship in the area of the first nine chapters of Proverbs has witnessed significant developments over the decades in the comprehension and interpretation of the material found in this particular section of the book. Nonetheless, scholarship still varies in terms of certain aspects. Views evolved in terms of the recognition of a collection of possibly ten instructions in Prov 1-9 by a father or teacher to a son or pupil retaining similar formal aspects. However, scholars are still uncertain about the evaluation of the *lower limits* or the structural coherence of these instructions as a group. It is also accepted that these instructions have been expanded at certain stages but there is no *communis opinio* about the fact whether these additions were of a theological nature or not.⁵¹ The increasing view is that the putative theological expansion was not of a *religious* nature in a way in which it has usually been understood to be in order to turn the *secular* material into *religious*. More and more scholars seem to offer criticisms of the long-held dichotomized view of secular and religious wisdom, which creates more room for more plausible theological treatments of the material. Moreover, there are tendencies towards viewing Prov 1-9 as a whole a composition of instructions without denying that the wisdom poems encountered in it may vary in certain aspects.

Another issue, which underwent some progression, concerns the ancient near eastern influence, particularly the prepossession of the Egyptian instruction genre. There is a proclivity however, to minimize the notion of direct

50 Nel, *Structure*, 97-101. In relation to the authority of the speech of Wisdom in Prov 8:1-36, see further Baumann, *Weisheitsgestalt*, 111.

51 Whybray, *Survey*, 70.