

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR A KING: PSALM 101

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PSALM 101 has been traditionally accepted as one of the royal psalms.¹ It consists of a series of affirmations that, it is believed, were declared by the king on a specific occasion in the religious life of Israel. The royal statements, however, bear a significant resemblance to the themes that pervade the teachings of Proverbs. Because of this apparent influence of wisdom, it seems that something can be learned about the relationship between the sapiential heritage² and the royal tradition³ by considering this psalm from the perspective of its correspondence with the wisdom teachings.

This study will be made up of three parts: an analysis of the literary composition of the psalm; a discussion about the context in which the psalm may have been used; and, a study of the associations between the themes of the psalm and the wisdom teachings.

I

Psalms 101 is unique in that it does not fit any of the patterns of the characteristic types of psalm. It consists of no clearly defined *Gattung* which

¹ The complete list of royal psalms generally includes Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 132, 144 and 2 Samuel 23.

² The current discussion about the meaning of wisdom in OT theology has provoked numerous studies. Cf. G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972); H. H. Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit* (BZAW 101; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966); R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament* (New York: de Gruyter, 1974); W. A. Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith* (Richmond: John Knox, 1972); "Scripture and an Ecumenical Life-Style: A Study in Wisdom Theology," *Interp* 24 (1970) 3-19; and "The Triumphalist Tendency in Exegetical History," *JAAAR* 38 (1970) 367-80; R. E. Murphy, "Assumptions and Problems in Old Testament Wisdom Research," *CBQ* 29 (1967) 407-18; and "The Interpretation of Old Testament Wisdom Literature," *Interp* 23 (1969) 289-301; J. L. Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence Upon 'Historical' Literature," *JBL* 88 (1969) 129-42.

³ A few of the studies on the royal traditions are: L. Rost, "Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids," *Das kleine Credo und andere Studien zum Alten Testament* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1965) 1198-283; G. von Rad, "The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) 166-204; P. J. Calderone, *Dynastic Oracle and Suzerainty Treaty: 2 Samuel 7, 8-16* (Logos 1; Manila: Ateneo de Manila University, 1966); R. A. Carlson, *David, the Chosen King* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964); W. A. Brueggemann, "David and His Theologian," *CBQ* 30 (1968) 156-81; "On Trust and Freedom: A Study of Faith in the Succession Narrative," *Interp* 26 (1972) 3-19; "Life and Death in Tenth Century Israel," *JAAAR* 40 (1972) 96-109.

could contribute to an analysis of its content or setting. Fragments of the hymn and the lament have been noted as components of the distinctive pattern of this psalm.⁴

The psalm is introduced with a hymnic couplet, the theme of which is the *hesed* and *mišpāṭ* that define the king's unique relationship with his God and with his people:

- 1 Of devotion and justice I will sing,
To you, Yahweh, I will make music in praise.⁵

The body of the psalm (vv. 2-7) outlines the conduct which the Israelite king had learned was desirable behavior for a ruler. Vv. 2-3a present a programmatic statement about the moral conduct appropriate for the king. It is interrupted only with a question, a plea for divine help in the task of governance.⁶

- 2 I will give attention to the way that is blameless.
When will you come to me?
I will walk with integrity of heart within my house.
- 3 I will not set before my eyes anything that is base.

The remaining verses of the body of the psalm specify how the ideal conduct for the king will be carried out by him. These obligations are elaborated in a negative (vv. 3b-5) and positive formulation (vv. 6-7):

- The doing of evil I hate; it will not cleave to me.
- 4 A perverse heart shall turn from me;
evil I will not know.
 - 5 He who slanders his neighbor in secret,
him I will make silent.⁷
As for the haughty of eyes and arrogant of heart,
him I shall indeed destroy.⁸
 - 6 My eyes will be on the faithful of the land
that they may dwell with me.

⁴H. Gunkel (*Die Psalmen* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926] 432-33) and Otto Kaiser ("Erwägungen zu Psalm 101," *ZAW* 74 [1962] 195-205) classify the psalm as a lament because of the peculiarity of the *qinah*-meter throughout and the question (v. 2a), frequently found in the laments. S. Mowinckel (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1967], I. 66) sees in the psalm elements from the hymn, lament, and prayer combined to make a new unity.

⁵The translation of the psalm is my own, with an attempt to capture the symmetry and grammatical design of the Hebrew. All other scriptural quotations are taken from the *RSV*.

⁶The question has proved so incomprehensible in this context that some scholars prefer to assume a corrupt text. So H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 432; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen II* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966) 688; and A. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 648, who alter the text to read ³*mt* for *mty*. Gunkel and Kraus read "Wahrheit komme vor mich!"; while Weiser translates the stichos as "truth shall abide with me."

⁷This translation for *šmt* is suggested by KB, 808.

⁸The reading suggested by M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography III," *Bib* 46 (1965) 328.

One who walks in the way that is blameless,
he will minister to me.

- 7 He will not sit within my house,
who practices deceit.

One who speaks lies,
he will not stand before my eyes.

In the first of these groupings, the king's attitude toward evil is directly introduced (v. 3b), and is expanded with a triple specification of that evil (vv. 4-5). The same is true of the king's attitude regarding the faithful of the land. He affirms the presence of the faithful in his realm (v. 6a), then details the characteristics of those who will be associated with him (vv. 6b-7).

The conclusion to the psalm seals the promise that the king will fulfill his obligation to see that justice prevails in Israel:⁹

- 8 Morning by morning I will make silent
all the wicked in the land,
cutting off from the city of Yahweh
all the doers of evil.

The literary unity of the psalm is evident from the overall structure and also from its internal harmony. The psalm begins and ends with a lyric couplet, each of which names Yahweh and presents the essential theme of the psalm — peace and order among the people living in the “city of Yahweh,” made possible by the practice of justice. The reference to “devotion and justice” (v. 1) is balanced by the allusion to the practice of judgment (v. 8).

The body of the psalm is enveloped by a series of identical phrases which create a balance in the structure:

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|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| vv. 2a and 6b | <i>béderek tāmîm</i> , | “way that is blameless” |
| vv. 2b and 7a | <i>bēqereb bêtî</i> , | “within my house” |
| vv. 3a and 7b | <i>lěneged ʿēnāy</i> , | “before my eyes.” |

These are the key phrases that bind the psalm into a structural unity. They appear in the three statements that pertain to the king's conduct and in the three statements that focus upon the associates of the king in his realm. The king and the people alike are challenged to a kind of behavior that distinguishes those invited to the covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Within this structure are three groups, each of which is composed of four elements. The first group, the royal code of behavior (vv. 2-3), is stated in the first person with verbs in the imperfect tense. The divergent element, the question (v. 2b), very effectively interrupts the series of affirmative statements.

The second group (vv. 3b-5) has as its primary theme the hatred of evil. Three specifying statements are expressed in an identical grammatical pattern. Each description of evil is followed by an attitudinal response of the king in the first person and by a verb in the imperfect tense.

⁹That the allusion here pertains to the act of judgment on the part of the king is dependent upon the evidence that the king customarily fulfilled this function in the morning. Cf. 2 Sam 15:2-3; Jer 21:11-12.

The third group (vv. 6-7) centers upon the theme of what kind of person will dwell in the kingdom. Each member of this trilogy is composed of a participial phrase and an indictment in the third person. The position of the participle is also balanced in the three lines. In the first and third, the participle begins the line; in the middle unit, it comes at the end.

The balanced structure and consistent grammatical pattern suggest a poetic composition designed with precision and care. The psalm is not a mixture of ideas combined into a confused pattern as is sometimes expected after a cursory reading. The balanced poetry indicates a stylized recitation which was probably a formulation from a particular ceremony in the life of the king.

II

Psalms 101 in its uniqueness has been the object of study by many scholars.¹⁰ The general consensus seems to be that the psalm was spoken by the king at a ceremony for his coronation, but opinions regarding the content differ significantly. H. Gunkel calls the psalm a "Thronbesteigungs-Proklamation" or "Thronrede" of the king of Judah on the day of his enthronement.¹¹ According to K. Crim, it is the "king's statement of loyalty to the ethical demands of his office" spoken during the Royal Zion Festival.¹² H.-J. Kraus isolates the "hymn of justice" (v. 8) as the key to the interpretation of the psalm. The psalm would be, therefore, a "Loyalitätsgelübde" or "Reinheitsgelübde des Regenten."¹³ As representative of God, the king's acts of judgment assured that justice was practiced much as the cultic minister announced who may worship.

According to S. Mowinckel, Psalm 101 fit into the ceremonies for the enthronement of the king repeated yearly at the New Year Festival. In the same pattern as the Babylonian recital of confession and penance, the king by a declaration of innocence cleansed himself of past sins and thereby renewed his kingship by promising to rule the kingdom according to "justice" and the "goodwill of the covenant."¹⁴ A. R. Johnson altered Mowinckel's reconstruction of the cultic ceremony somewhat by viewing it as a ritual of humiliation, which he understood to be part of the coronation ceremony. The king uttered an oath of innocence before Yahweh, that Yahweh might deliver

¹⁰ K. Crim, *Royal Psalms* (Richmond: John Knox, 1962) 110-12; M. Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150* (AB 17A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 1-7; H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 432-33; A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1967) 113-16; O. Kaiser, "Erwägungen," 195-205; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen II*, 688-92; S. Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 65-71; A. Weiser, *The Psalms*, 647-50.

¹¹ *Die Psalmen*, 433; also A. Weiser, *The Psalms*, 648.

¹² *Royal Psalms*, 111-12.

¹³ *Psalmen II*, 689-92.

¹⁴ *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 65-67. For a description of the Babylonian ritual practice, cf. H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1948) 320.

him from the powers of darkness and thus renew the life or well-being of the nation for another year.¹⁵

There is no question that the psalm was the king's statement before Yahweh about fidelity to his kingly obligations. The substance of the affirmations pertains to certain specific norms that focus upon the effectiveness of his reign. The king, on a specific occasion, declared what he will do during his reign, what he will reject, and what must be the attitude of his community. The most obvious situation for such a bold affirmation was surely that event at which the king assumed his position as ruler of the people of Yahweh when he declared his integrity before Yahweh as one faithful in his loyalty and obedience.

The king of Judah was not just a political sovereign, nor did he stand for the nation as a god like the king of the ancient orient.¹⁶ He was rather one from among the people of Yahweh who, because of the singular privilege of being anointed to kingship, bore a special responsibility of guardianship for the faith of the nation. His special task was obedience to the voice of Yahweh that demanded of him the practice of justice. The charge given to the king was that he be a loyal and obedient follower of Yahweh by acting toward his associates with honesty and equity. The king was commissioned to preserve the life of the nation by the practice of justice, for only by justice is order in the land and harmony among peoples maintained. The very life of the nation either flourishes or is extinguished in accord with the support of its life-lines — the integrity of its leader and the people before God and among themselves. Indeed, the liaison with Yahweh does not exist that is not exemplified in a harmonious, communal interrelatedness.

On the occasion of the king's elevation to the throne he would most likely sing of "devotion and justice." This is the day for the king to celebrate Yahweh's *hesed*¹⁷ for his chosen people and for his anointed, and to promise that *mišpāt*¹⁸ will be the rule in Judah. The event of the enthronement dramatically symbolizes the bringing of order to the nation of Yahweh. For the king upon his throne functions as judge, as a preserver of peace and justice within the community of the chosen people. The harmony thus created within the nation witnesses to the integrity of the bond between Yahweh and his people.

¹⁵ *Sacral Kingship*, 113-16.

¹⁶ The king in Egypt possessed divinity and as such maintained control over the land of Egypt and its inhabitants. The king in Mesopotamia, as an adopted son of god, acted as the regent of the gods, representing the divine power for the people. Cf. H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, esp. 51-100 and 231-61.

¹⁷ *Hesed* refers to the essential relationship existing between God and man. Cf. N. Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1967), and the summary of scholarship presented there.

¹⁸ *Mišpāt* designates the right order and truth, the peace and righteousness, that derive from the Maat concept. The royal psalms, 72:1-7; 89:15, and Prov 1:3; 2:9; 21:3, 15; 28:5 know of *mišpāt* as proper to the function of the king. Cf. H. H. Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1968) 83-89.

The pattern of a series of solemn "I" statements pledging the fulfillment of certain obligations is not foreign to the Israelite tradition. This form of a "confession of innocence" has long been recognized in the ritual practice prior to entrance into the temple or to participation in a feast.¹⁹

The covenant ceremony recorded in Deuteronomy 26 is concluded with a testimony on the part of the worshippers that they have acted according to the custom of the feast and have obeyed the commands of the covenant. The declaration is stated in response to a particular series of requirements specified as necessary before one can participate in the feast. The content of the statements has to do with obligations that are particular to this feast being celebrated and pertain to communal matters.

When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce . . . then you shall say before the Lord your God,
 "I have removed the sacred portion . . . and
 I have given it to the Levite . . . ;
 I have not transgressed any of thy commandments,
 neither have I forgotten them;
 I have not eaten of the tithe . . . ;
 I have obeyed the voice of the Lord my God,
 I have done according to all that thou hast commanded me." (vv. 12-14)

The individuals coming to the feast first declared that they have acted in accord with the stipulations demanded in their daily actions and on this basis are confirmed to be in covenant with Yahweh. The statement that follows upon the individual affirmations verifies that the covenant relationship had been sealed on the basis of the acknowledgement by each person:

You have declared this day concerning the Lord that he is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his ordinances, and will obey his voice; and the Lord has declared this day concerning you that you are a people for his own possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments . . . (vv. 17-18)

The covenant ceremony at Gilgal during which the king was proclaimed was also introduced with a series of "I" statements. Samuel called upon the congregation to witness to his integrity as the faithful covenant mediator before God and king. Samuel declared his uprightness by asking the questions of the congregation:

Here I am; testify against me before the Lord and
 before his anointed.

¹⁹ K. Galling ("Der Beichtspiegel: Eine gattungsgeschichtliche Studie," *ZA W* 6 [1929] 125-130) studied the form, the confession of innocence, and situated it within a ritual ceremony prior to entrance into the temple (Psalms 15, 24; Isa 33:15-16), or to participation in a feast (Deut 26:12-14). The response to the priest gave the worshipper the right to participate in the particular celebration. Psalm 101 has been associated with the entrance liturgy, Psalms 15 and 24, also by K. Koch, "Tempeleinlassliturgien und Dekaloge," *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961) 45-60; and G. von Rad, "The Early History of the Form-Category of I Corinthians XIII, 4-7," *The Problem of the Hexateuch*, 313-316.

Whose ox have I taken?
 Or whom have I defrauded?
 Whom have I oppressed?
 Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind
 my eyes with it? (1 Sam 12:3)

The response of the congregation attested to Samuel's innocence: "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand" (v. 4). The content of this series of affirmations pertains to specific norms that were the accepted ideal for proper dealings with one's neighbor. On this basis, Samuel declared his uprightness before Yahweh and so attested to his fidelity to covenant. From this it is obvious that the basis for the covenant relationship with Yahweh is a right relationship with one's neighbor. And it is this communal harmony that is Yahweh's will for his people. Peace and order within the community are the sign of man's allegiance with the Creator.

Psalms 18 (2 Samuel 22), a royal psalm, gives a quite clear indication of an affinity with Psalm 101. It shares the characteristics of a statement of uprightness with a series of personal affirmations and is the more noteworthy, because the content of the expressions corresponds more closely than the two previous examples to that of the psalm under discussion.

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;
 according to the cleanness of my hands he
 recompensed me.
 For I have kept the ways of the Lord,
 and have not wickedly departed from my God.
 For all his ordinances were before me,
 and his statutes I did not put away from me.
 I was blameless before him,
 and I kept myself from guilt.
 Therefore, the Lord recompensed me according to my
 righteousness, according to my cleanness in
 his sight. (Ps 18:21-25)²⁰

This portion of Psalm 18, though fitted into a quite different context, may well have emerged from the very event for which Psalm 101 was used. An additional element of this unit is the reference to the "cleanness of hands" (vv. 21 and 25). In structure, the affirmation of uprightness is encircled by this indication of a cultic ritual. Galling pointed out that the washing of hands was the symbolic gesture for a statement of innocence.²¹ It may be that the ritual allusion here is a fuller description of what took place at the enthronement ceremony as it was practiced in Judah. There is ample evidence in the Scriptures to affirm the existence of such a rite.²²

If this is the case, the royal enthronement at which the king declared himself to be a faithful follower of Yahweh loyal to covenant would have been

²⁰ Psalm 18 = 2 Samuel 22 has been associated with the early monarchy. Cf. F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, "A Royal Song of Thanksgiving: II Sam 22 = Psalm 18," *JBL* 72 (1953) 16-20.

²¹ "Beichtspiegel . . ." 128-30.

²² Pss 26:6; 73:13; 24:4; Deut 21:6.

carried out thus: in a dialogic exchange with a cultic leader, the king would respond to questions that focused upon the conduct that was the criterion for the royal leader, and that was expected for a suitable relationship with his people. After declaring his uprightness before Yahweh and stating his intention to give full attention to the well-being of his realm, the king would wash his hands in a symbolic expression that witnessed to his integrity before Yahweh and the people.²³

There is every reason to suspect that this personal expression of uprightness properly fits the occasion of the royal inauguration into office. Both the language and the form of this declaration betray the stylized recital that is proper to ritual. Furthermore, the content is specifically suitable for that occasion. It pertains to the essential obligations of the king in his sacral office. In this affirmation of his own stance before Yahweh and the people, he declares what is incumbent upon himself as the royal leader (vv. 2-3a), what he must reject in order to live faithfully by this ideal (vv. 3b-5), and finally, what must be the attitude of the people with whom he associates in the common bond of covenant before Yahweh (vv. 6-7).²⁴ The king's open witness to faithfulness in the trust granted him publicly certifies that his relationship with both the people and with Yahweh is firmly established.²⁵ By his pledge in a ritual situation, the king and the people thereby participate in effecting for themselves a peaceful, harmonious, and wholesome existence. They enter once again into the order in which man lives in accord with God and with his fellow man within the divine plan.²⁶

The role of the king for Israel is greatly highlighted by this consideration. He is commonly recognized as the representative before Yahweh for the

²³ See A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 102-28, for one view of the reconstruction of the ritual of enthronement. Johnson shows that the king, after stating his claim to righteousness (Psalm 101), was delivered from the powers of darkness by Yahweh and thus brought about a renewal of the life and well-being of the nation for another year.

²⁴ The particular obligation of the king for his people may have been contracted in a formal agreement of covenant. Evidence for a covenant between the king and the people can be found in 2 Sam 5:3. The covenant described here was made between the elders of the people and the king when David was anointed. A. Jepsen ("Berith," *Verbannung und Heimkehr* [Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1961] 163) says that this covenant was made before Yahweh as a firm pledge that the king would be concerned for the whole life of the people. 2 Kgs 11:17; Jos 24:25; and 2 Kgs 23:3 also describe a covenant made with the people. The existence of such an agreement between king and people is convincingly demonstrated by Georg Fohrer ("Der Vertrag zwischen König und Volk in Israel," *ZAW* 71 [1959] 1-22).

²⁵ It is striking that the declarations made by the king for himself and for his people balance also in rhetorical expression. See above, vv. 2-3a, 6-7.

²⁶ The association of the king with creation and, therefore, with the order of nature and society belongs to the common traditions of the ancient Near Eastern world. See H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 51-60, 148-61, 277-94; H. Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958) 33-45; S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954) 21-95. H. H. Schmid ("Schöpfung, Gerechtigkeit und Heil," *ZTK* 70 [1973] 1-19) argues that order and, therefore, the doctrine of creation lie at the basis of the whole of biblical theology. Beginning his study with ancient Near Eastern traditions in which cosmological and political order were derived from victory over chaos, Schmid shows that also in the OT traditions, justice, nature, and politics are aspects of one all-embracing order of creation.

people. In this capacity the pledge of loyalty is spoken for himself and for the people. He witnesses to his own fidelity in the task of maintaining justice by his own conduct and judgment, and he states positively what is expected of the community to insure harmonious living. The king is clearly one from among the people sharing in the common bond of covenant with Yahweh, but charged with the task of guarding that faith by his prerogative as judge. He thus participates in the life-giving experience of preserving a situation of order for the entire nation.

III

The basic role of the king presented here is also the understanding of the king's position as it is set down in the wisdom teachings. The Book of Proverbs places particular emphasis on the conduct expected of the nobility.²⁷ But the section Proverbs 1-9²⁸ is especially characterized by wisdom's invitation to the king offering him participation in its creative activity:

By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just;
by me princes rule and nobles govern the earth. (Prov 8:15-16)

This invitation explicitly associates the king's activities with the life of the realm. He is called to a participation in the communication of life,²⁹ which for the kingdom means the healthy, wholesome body of people, living in harmonious interrelationship.

The king's response to the call of wisdom demands also his acceptance of the way exacted by wisdom:

Do not enter the path of the wicked,
and do not walk in the way of evil men. (Prov 4:14)³⁰

This imperative of wisdom imposed serious obligation upon the king; it challenged him to identify with the ways of the Lord, to live in the fear of Yahweh. He is beckoned to a particular attitude and intention that "are life to him who finds them and healing to all his flesh" (Prov 4:22). In his statement of uprightness spoken on his enthronement day, the king witnessed to this kind of attitude and intention as his contribution to the life of the kingdom.

Wisdom's teaching has to do primarily with living in community, with the

²⁷ Prov 14:35; 16:10, 12-15; 19:12; 20:2, 8, 26, 28; 21:1; 22:11; 25:2, 5-7; 29:4, 14.

²⁸ Some studies concerned with Prov 1-9 include: W. McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), who emphasizes the instructional aspect of these chapters; R. N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9* (SBT 45; London: SCM, 1965), who isolates literary forms and stages of development; C. Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9* (WMANT 22; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966), who traces parallels in Egyptian literature; and R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), who concludes that the secular sayings of wisdom have been reinterpreted by a theologizing editor.

²⁹ Cf. R. E. Murphy, "The Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," *Interp* 20 (1966) 3-14; and G. von Rad, "The Self-Revelation of Creation," *Wisdom in Israel*, 144-76.

³⁰ Cf. the series of prohibitions, Prov 3:25-31.

peaceful interrelationship among peoples. The sayings and warnings are the composite of the insight and experience of generations who learned from life and shared their perception of what contributes for good.³¹ As was discussed above, whatever disrupts the communal bond also severs relationship with Yahweh. The disruptive factors consist particularly of a mode of conduct or attitude toward self and neighbor that detracts from the community's well-being. The wisdom theologians quite precisely specify "pride and arrogance . . . and perverted speech" (Prov 8:13) as the cause of the corruption:

A worthless person, a wicked man
goes about with crooked speech,
.
with perverted heart devises evil
continually sowing discord. (Prov 6:12, 14)

Because of the destructive consequence for human relationship, such attitudes must be removed or shunned. The king's statement regarding his hatred of evil gives proof of his compliance with wisdom's invitation. For his own well-being and for his community, his charge is to deliver himself "from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech" (Prov 2:12). The most serious threat to the establishment of a peaceful kingdom is disharmony among men created by devious members who act and speak in ways that disrupt the total well-being.

The detriment to solidarity among men is not described as an outside force imposing punishment. The divine wrath is not the cause of the consequent suffering among men. Rather, the hindrance to life and growth are the disruptive and violent forces that produce discord and disharmony within the living body of the community.³² It is this evil that the Lord hates, that which is contrary to Yahweh's will for his people:

There are six things which the Lord hates,
seven which are an abomination to him;
haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood,

³¹ The origins of the wisdom tradition in Israel is being vigorously discussed at present. Two viewpoints appear to be in tension: that wisdom's setting was the royal school/court is held by W. Richter, *Recht und Ethos* (SANT 15; Munich: Kösel, 1966) 183-89; H.-J. Hermisson, *Studien zur israelitischen Spruchweisheit* (WMANT 28; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968); and G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 11-16. That the setting is an older family and clan wisdom is the hypothesis of E. Gerstenberger, *Wesen und Herkunft des "Apodiktischen Rechts"* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), and "Covenant and Commandment," *JBL* 84 (1965) 38-51; H. W. Wolff, *Amos' geistige Heimat* (WMANT 18; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965). It may be that the monarchy was instrumental in preserving and disseminating the clan wisdom as it absorbed the faith traditions and effected the integration between the tribal life and the cultural milieu.

³² For the discussion regarding the connection of act and consequence, see G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 124-37; H. Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, 38-45. Klaus Koch ("Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?" *ZTK* 52 [1955] 1-42) views this connection as a natural occurrence without divine intervention, but in which Yahweh acts as the overseer who brings to completion what man has initiated. H. G. Reventlow ("Sein Blut komme über sein Haupt," *VT* 10 [1960] 311-27) sees God as mediating the consequences.

a heart that devises wicked plans,
 feet that make haste to run to evil,
 a false witness who breathes out lies,
 and a man who sows discord among brothers.³³ (Prov 6:16-19)

Each of these causes of "discord among brothers" is a force that contributes to the ruin of society. They are man's destructive and lethal weapons which consume and shatter the vital bond of community. It is no wonder that the king's charge is to put "crooked speech" and "devious talk" far away from himself (Prov 4:24). His actions and those of his associates ought rather to bespeak the "righteousness and justice and equity" (Prov 2:9; 1:3)³⁴ which are the substance of wisdom's promise.

These guidelines articulated in the sapiential tradition are precisely the stipulations that must guide the king in his rule. Justice will flourish only if he will walk in the "way that is blameless" (*tāmīm*, 2a)³⁵ and "with integrity (*tōm*) of heart" (2c).³⁶ His associates in the kingdom must also walk in this "way" (6b). Inherent in this option is the king's participation in the gracious promises of covenant. The Lord who gives wisdom (Prov 2:6) also promises his support to the blameless:

(Yahweh) is a shield³⁷ to those who walk
 in integrity (*tōm*, Prov 2:7b).

He grants them the inheritance of the promise, the gracious gift of the land:

³³The numerical sayings have the character of a challenging question. It is the second numerical reference which is filled out in regard to content and which points to the culminating impact in the final statement. Cf. G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 35-37; and W. M. W. Roth, "The Numerical Sequence X/X + 1 in the Old Testament," *VT* 12 (1962) 300-11.

³⁴The key OT term expressing the notion of relationship, especially as this relational bond exists between God and man in covenant, is *šdq*. See G. von Rad, "'Righteousness' and 'Life' in the Cultic Language of the Psalms," *The Problem of the Hexateuch*, 243-66. H. H. Schmid (*Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung*) traced the concept *šdq* from the ancient Near Eastern cultures and demonstrated the historical application of the notion by Israel.

³⁵The notion, being "blameless," predominates especially as a requisite for covenant. It occurs in the P accounts of Noah (Gen 6:9) and of Abraham (Gen 17:1), as the prelude for the securing of the covenant bond. M. Weinfeld ("The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90 [1970] 186) specifies these passages, along with Prov 10:9 and Psalm 101 (p. 185 n. 12 and p. 186 n. 15), as demonstrative of the king's loyalty to his divine patron who in turn rewards the obedient son with gifts of land and dynasty. The Grant Treaty as a reward for loyalty and obedience could be the model for the promissory-type covenant of Abraham and David.

³⁶"Heart" is a common symbol in wisdom language. See N. C. Habel, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," *Interp* 26 (1972) 131-57. It is the center of all human capacity. Cf. R. C. Dentan, "Heart," *IDB* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1. 549-50; A. R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1964) 75-87; and H. W. Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments* (Munich: Kaiser, 1973) 68-95.

³⁷Yahweh as "shield" occurs also in the covenant with Abraham context (Gen 15:1); and in Psalm 47 it refers to the rulers of the earth who belong to Yahweh. Cf. J. Muilenburg, "Psalm 47," *JBL* 63 (1944) 249. The use in Proverbs is a sapiential context that specifies the relationship of Yahweh with the *tāmīm*.

For the upright will inherit the land,³⁸
and men of integrity (*tēmīmīm*) will remain in it.

The counterpart, and that which the king vows to avoid, is the “perverse heart” ^c*iqqēš* (4a).³⁹ The contrast of these themes — integrity and perversity, *tōm*/^c*iqqēš* — demonstrates the options of the king in his decisions for his kingdom before God.⁴⁰

In this series of affirmations, the king declared that his conduct and his attitude before men and, therefore, before Yahweh were in accord with what contributed to the well-being and harmony in the family of God’s people. In what he uttered, he is attesting to his compliance with the norms that should govern all of his dealings. What the king chooses to do and what he admits for his community is the obverse of what can be summarized as an attitude of pride and viciousness of speech. It is against these destructive capacities that wisdom cautions and offers guidelines. The promise of wisdom is precisely the gift of Yahweh with its supportive invitation,

delivering (him) from the way of evil,
from men of perverted speech,
who forsake the paths of uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness,
who rejoice in doing evil
and delight in the perverseness of evil;
men whose paths are crooked,
and who are devisous in their ways. (Prov 2:12-15)

By his avoidance of all that disrupts the communal bond of the realm and severs the relationship with Yahweh, the king has made his choice to “fear the Lord” (Prov 1:29). He has heeded the call of “wisdom” (Prov 4:5-7) and has grasped the life that is treasure to those who identify with “wisdom” (Prov 3:13-18). The harmony, peace, order founded on justice — the signs of the nation’s life — witness to fidelity in covenant with Yahweh.

Conclusion

This study suggests that the Israelite traditions of covenant and wisdom attain a point of contact in the royal leader. The king, as the guardian of the faith traditions of his people, was responsible before Yahweh for the solidarity of the covenant bond by his loyal and obedient response to the voice of

³⁸ It is significant that the gift of the land, the promise of the covenant (Gen 22:17; 26:4) with Abraham, occurs here in a wisdom saying as the reward for the “blameless.”

³⁹ The perverse are not the upright (Prov 11:20; 28:6, 18); they deviate from the right path (Prov 2:15; 22:5) and are therefore directly opposite to those “who walk with integrity.”

⁴⁰ W. A. Brueggemann (“A Neglected Sapiential Word Pair,” in a forthcoming issue of *ZAW*) deals with this theme in his study of the word-pair, integrity/perversity (*tmm*/^c*qš*). He establishes the sapiential use as being the contrast between those who act in the context of community for its well-being and those who act against it to the disruption of community. R. N. Whybray (*Intellectual Tradition*, 136), on the contrary, does not classify ^c*iqqēš* as characteristic of the wisdom tradition because of its occurrence in cultic contexts.

Yahweh. In his political function to execute judgment, the task charged to him was to practice justice that order and peace might prevail in the land of the people of Yahweh.

The royal theology contained in Psalm 101 draws upon the sacred covenant tradition on which Israel was founded and the inherited sapiential tradition that flourished and was nurtured by the scribes attached to the royal court. Thus, the wisdom teachings became integrated with the essential faith traditions and supplied the content for the statement about the king's rule. The norms of conduct which assure the well-being and peaceful co-existence in society likewise witness to the integrity of the covenant bond with Yahweh. On the day of his enthronement when the king pledged his intention to promote justice, he attested by that affirmation that his relationship with both the people and with Yahweh was firmly established.

