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Sages and Wisdom across Cultures: A Comparative Study of Tiv and Biblical Proverbs (Proverbs 1:8-33)

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Abstract

God has given proverbs to every peoples of the earth to His glory, as a resource for acquiring wisdom. The Tiv people of North Central Nigeria too trained up their youth with words of the wise that they may shun evil and follow righteousness. Both Hebrews and Tiv proverbs aimed at training one to fear God and to love one's fellow neighbor. This work as a literary study analyzed Proverbs 1:8-33 and was optimistic for the work of the sages in our contemporary societies as it alloyed the Hebrew sages and Tiv sages in training the youth to fear God and love his commandment. It also explained that wisdom is not given only to the Hebrew; hence, the Tiv sages also trained their youth with words of marble, admonishing them to hold onto truth and acquire knowledge that enrich the young in the fear of God. The research adopts "Oral Tradition as History" as its theoretical framework, since Tiv Proverbs were mostly oral wisdom literature. The research employed comparative and interpretive methods of research to get at its findings and came to the conclusion that all peoples of the earth have sages who with their wise sayings train up the child. Therefore, every works of the sages must cog towards training the child to fear God and love his neighbor. However, wise sayings without this end, no matter how good they are, may not lead one to a better life.

Keywords: Tiv, Wisdom Literature, Proverbs, Moral Instruction, Comparative Theology

Introduction

Biblical proverbs are significant proof of wisdom among the peoples of the earth. Proverbs 1:8-33 proves that biblical sages were men of their time who with a great deal of proverbs demonstrated wisdom as a gift from God. All peoples of the earth have a good record of people with great wisdom, whose wisdom provided moral upbringing to the youth. Just as the Hebrews and every other peoples of the earth, the Tiv of North Central Nigeria celebrated sages' great wisdom and teachings that were capable of giving wisdom to the young who went astray.

Akpenpuun Dzurgbain in his *On the Tiv of Central Nigeria: A cultural perspective* maintains that "Proverbology was a body of wise sayings that constituted the Tiv people's oral wisdom literature. Proverbologiests inculcated ethical principles based on natural law and human experience" (95). As Dzurgba affirms, Proverbs of the Tiv people were not written down as it is with biblical proverbs, but were used in every day's life to teach people who lacked wisdom, and those who sought to have it. It was obviously mostly told by elders whose characters depicted what they taught as they were men of integrity, who commanded respect among their people. Therefore, this work seeks to interpret Proverbs 1: 8-33, alloying the Hebrews and the Tiv proverbs, showing their strength in giving wisdom to people who dedicated themselves to seeking to understand and to discern words of the sages, which lead one (finally) to the fear of God as it is the main focus of the book of Proverbs.

Theoretical framework

A work like this must employ a theoretical framework for it to be sound and reliable. Therefore, this work adopts "oral tradition as history" as its theory; a theory proposed by Jan Vansina in 1961, in his book *Oral Tradition as History*. Vansina looked at "oral tradition as applying to both a process and to its products" (1). According to him, any given oral tradition is but a rendering at one moment, an element in the process of oral development that began with the original communication, the characteristics of each rendering will differ according to its position in the whole process (4). Not until around 1900s most of Tiv literature were orally spoken and their elders were the custodian of everything that transpired among the Tiv people. Giving that Tiv proverbs were oral wisdom Jan Vansima's oral tradition as history is very suitable for this work. The Tiv never had their proverbs written but were very powerful wisdom literature in inculcating wisdom to the naïve. The youth learnt from the elders and by so doing developed wisdom much that it enabled them to face every day's challenges, and they also grew up to then transfer wisdom to the younger generation. Tiv oral tradition is also considered as their history, even as there were not much written documents about the Tiv of North Central Nigeria. The Tiv oral history embraces everything about them, including oral proverbs literature, the art, Tiv dance culture, cultic activities and so on. Tiv oral proverbs literature are also a gift from God, hence, wisdom literature was also celebrated by the Tiv of North Central

Nigeria as its cultural identity just as the Hebrew did.

Research Question, Study's Aim and Scholarly Relevance

The research question this work seeks to articulate is whether Biblical or Hebrew sages were the only ones endowed with wisdom to train and educate the young and the naïve who is on his way to gaining knowledge. Wisdom is a gift from God that is bestowed on all peoples of the earth. Every peoples of the earth had sages whose task was to introduce young ones to the path of wisdom aiming at understanding their cultural identity as a people, through wise sayings. This work therefore, aims at providing a clear and cognitive case in understanding intercultural significance in biblical studies, and to intensify why other cultures may not be placed over and above others. Consequently, the research successfully contextualizes biblical wisdom literature within an African cultural framework, affirming the universal presence of moral and divine instruction through proverbs. Just as the Hebrews and every other peoples of the earth, the Tiv of North Central Nigeria celebrated sages' great wisdom and teachings that were capable of giving wisdom to the young who went astray. On its contribution to academic and intellectual world the work is academically valuable for its intercultural approach, emphasizing the role of sages in moral formation across societies.

Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative literary analysis that employs comparative and interpretive structures in attaining its objective. It explicitly delineates its methodological boundaries, interpreting biblical or Hebrew proverbs alongside Tiv proverbs; and maintaining an intercultural approach by comparing Tiv sages and Hebrew sages in giving constructive wisdom to the naïve. The study choses proverbs, wooing its interpretation as suitable for the situation in our contemporary societies when the young seem to despise wisdom to choose folly. This study as a comparative theology seeks to give meaning to why the young should chose wisdom over and above folly. It however, does not grip proverbs of all peoples since the researcher's knowledge is limited. It again does not deal with all other proverbs in the Bible and the Tiv society, since its focus is on Proverbs 1: 8-33 in comparison to Tiv proverbs. The research engaged library books, journal publications and online materials for data collection.

Proverbs 1:8-33 and Tiv Proverbs

This section of the book of Proverbs engages a serious discussion on the reality of how faithful parental care should be. The parents here give true teaching to the young man who has not fully acquired wisdom. He is still a naïve, so, he needs chastisement for his moral outstanding and for the fear of God which is the central theme in the book of Proverbs (Prov.1:7). This section also deals with the call of Lady Wisdom inviting the naive to come

and get prudence and understanding which will keep him away from Lady Folly who would lead him to destruction. There are several imageries and poetical languages used here to beautify the teaching and to instruct the naïve.

As it is with the Hebrew proverbs, there are several of such Tiv proverbs that seek to advice the young man to shun evil and follow the way of the righteous that gives life. As earlier on stated in this work Tiv proverbs were taught mostly in the evening times when the young all gathered around the elderly man or woman of the compound either on his demand or by the request of the young who wanted to listen to the wisdom of the wise. Dzurgba confirms that "proverbological sayings or maxims formed an important part of the evening session of the theoretical teaching or tutorial discussion . . . Men, women and the children put forth proverbs for the rest to interpret; After several pupils had attempted one pupil answered it correctly" (96). This used to be like a school of the sages which was informally attended by those who were inquisitive to acquire wisdom. These proverbs ranged from teachings on sexual immorality, jealousness, selfishness, wickedness, hypocrisy, kindness, love, impartiality, justice and much more of ethical code on every aspect of human endeavor. The basic goal of Tiv proverbs was to teach the youth to fear *Aôndo* (God), who was considered the Supreme Being, who watched human behaviors from above and rewarded accordingly. Eugene Rubingh on the Tiv belief also confirms that "*Aôndo* who is the highest being controls all the activities in the universe and he was very important in the Tiv religion" (71). Tiv Proverbs were also aimed at teaching the youth to fear *Aôndo* and love their fellow human being.

For the purpose of this discussion the work has explored few of such Tiv proverbs that sought to give parental care for the youth, guarding them against evil that might befall them in comparison with the words of Proverbs 1:8-33. Again for the sake of an effective study the pericope has been clearly delineated, and is divided into two major sections; 1) the faithful parental teaching following the בְּנִי *(benin)* my son phrases; and 2) the call of Lady Wisdom to choose life or death.

The Faithful Parental Teaching

בְּנִי (benin) My Son I (Prov. 1: 8-9)

This section begins with a beautiful address to the child בְּנִי (*my son*), with which the next two sections also begin. There are opinions on this, as to whether this should be taken literally as the parents to the child or more of teacher- student relationship. For example, Leo G. Perdue avers that "the setting is more likely that of a school: a temple school, a civil academy, or perhaps a household guide of a scribe" (77). Perdue understands this to be more of a former school environment where the teacher engages the children with serious teaching, inculcating knowledge into them. In as much as scholars seek to give good reasons on why they think it is a teacher- student relationship, this research does not lay hands on enough proof to be convinced and be specific that it has to do with teacher-

student's advice. The research rather reasons that both interpretations could be applied, for parents also instruct their children at home in a similar way teachers do at schools. For that reason, it might be more suitable to the Tiv understanding since there was no former school environment among the Tiv where one could find the student-teacher relationship's interpretation as more suitable.

Proverbs 1:8 has made mention of both the father and the mother as involved in the teaching. In a similar vein Tiv parental care was not only entrusted unto the father, as the mother was also fully involved in the training of the child. This is evident in the Tiv proverb; *"ka ijimbakwase a tsahan wan ye"* (it is an adulterous woman that really disciplines her child). *Ijimbakwase* means an adulterous woman, while *tsahan* and *wan* mean discipline and child respectively. This implies that after living such an indecent life, she acquires enough experience that leads her to giving faithful parental advice to her child, warning her to shun evil ways. Therefore, in this context the most important thing is that the sage, either the father or the mother, or the teacher in school, calls the naïve to understanding, and it does not necessarily matter who does the teaching.

The phrase " שְׁמַע מוּסַר אָבִיךָ *(shama musar avyid)* Hear the instruction of your father" is calling the child to listen not only to the contents of the teaching but also to follow what is being taught, for the Hebrew שְׁמַע *shama* implies also to "obey" and to "heed" to. He has to make the teaching part of his life so that it would provide wisdom to him all the days of his life. The imageries, ornament and necklace (Prov. 1:9) used here indicate how valuable the teachings are to the child. The teachings are to be like an ornament of grace on his head and a necklace on his neck. These kinds of imageries reflect what is said in Deut. 6:4-9 on how the law of God was implied to the children of Israel. Perdue also holds a similar view that this metaphorical description of the value of teaching and discipline resonates with the images in Deut. 6:4-9 by which the commandments were to be placed on the hand, the forehead and the doorpost of the house (78). The reason behind it is that it might not be forgotten by the naïve.

בְּנִי (My Son) II (Prov. 1: 10-19)

The teacher again opens this section with "my son" and he moves into the teaching proper. He first warns the son against the seemingly beautiful speech of the sinner. He says "if sinners entice you, do not consent" (Prov. 1:10). R.N. Whybray observes here that verse 10 is metrically unusually short and verse 11 is unusually long. Some suggest that the omission of the phrase 'do not consent' would help solve the problem of meter identified in the two verses. But if that is done it will spoil the sharp warning given to the child (38). This work is also aware of the problem of meter when it comes to the study of poultry and therefore agrees with Whybray that the phrase should not be removed. In studying and understanding poetry it is good to observe the meter of the verses; however, when reading

Proverbs as the Word of God seeking to originate the message it transmits, one should seek to know more what the word is all about rather than a quest for meter.

The son is warned against bad company, unlawful gain and greed and shedding of innocent blood. If the sinners say to him "come let us lie in wait for blood" he should not pay attention to them nor follow them. Prov. 1: 11 and 12 have used synonymous parallelism and also have some similes used to describe the way of the evildoers. These are; "like Sheol," "like those who go down to pit," and "let us swallow them alive." Whybray points out an interesting matter here that "behind this imagery stands the Canaanite mythology: in the myth of Baal and Mot. Baal 'goes down into the throat of divine Mot' - that is, of Mot (Death), son of El- and so dies' (40). Therefore, for the sinners to swallow men means total extermination of their lives. This implies that their hands are not free from bloodshed (Prov.1:16; Duet.19:10; Isa.1:21; Jer.2:34 NIV). They invite the naïve to cast his lot with them so that they would have the same purse and his house would be filled with precious things. Therefore, the parents warn the young man (evidently leaving home on the way to adulthood), about the folly of unjust gain and the seduction of the sinners' speech (Clifford 34).

This section of biblical proverbs tarries with the Tiv proverb, *wan wam ijende i bo i ne ku* (my son bad company leads to death). *Wan wam* means my son, *ijende i bo* means bad company while the phrase *i ne ku* means it leads to death. The speech of the evil friends is very sweet but the end is not good, for it leads the naïve child to death. So, the faithful teacher or parent warns the son not to heed the speech of evil doers.

The teacher again calls on his son and with the continuation of the teaching he started, he returns to the warning he gave in verse 10, condemning and rejecting the company of evildoers. This research has observed, that the third בְּנִי "my son" of verse 15 is omitted in the Septuagint (LXX), which may lessen the solemnity of the warning. Whybray also suggests that it gives additional solemnity to the warning so there is no justification for omitting it (41). Whybray's view is right, because in a normal way of communication this helps to draw more the attention of the young man and it indicates the seriousness of the father and or the mother in the teaching. The son is warned not to walk on the way with evildoers as reflected above. This work has also observed, that "their feet are swift to bloodshed" in verse 16 is omitted in some Greek manuscripts like Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Some scholars say the phrase was a latter addition by the Masoretic Text, but this work opines, that the verse only emphasizes again the seriousness of the teacher about evil deeds of the wicked ones, and so must be taken seriously.

The young man is warned that it is senseless to spread a net in the sight of any winged creature (Prov. 1: 17). This is a real wise saying of the sages. Paul E. Koptak says that the saying works more like a riddle, and since it concerns a trap, it is good to read it with its literal meaning as a trap to determine how it will graft (74). Koptak continues that in the Bible a net or trap is often used as a metaphor for the violence of wicked men as well as

their judgment (Mic.7:2; Job 18:8-10; Ps.141:10; Hos.7:12) (74). Among the Tiv People, traps were set for birds and grains were poured around it to attract the birds. However, the trapper never stood there watching, but left the site of the trap so that the bird would come to eat the grains which resulted to trapping it. This kind of practice is also mentioned as associated with the Ancient Near East (ANE) (Koptak 74). The major problem here is the interpretation of the Hebrew חִנָּם (*hinam)* rendered as; "useless", "in vain" and "without cause", in English versions, which has also been reflected in Proverbs 1:11. Again the phrase "in the sight of any kind of bird" is part of the problem in this interpretation. The bird does not come to eat the grains when the man trapping it is standing there, but as soon as the man leaves, the bird comes to eat the grains and it is trapped. The bird is trapped because it is unaware of the trap. Koptak says the trap works only when the prey does not know what is happening, so the evil gang too does not know that it shall one day be caught. As the bird sees no reason to avoid the grains, these men are caught unaware because they see no reason to leave their evil ways (75). This work disagrees with Koptak on his interpretation, because it does not explain the riddle as applied to the teaching given to the young man in this passage. The bird is trapped because it is unaware of the trap, but there is no reason for the young man to be trapped in joining the evil gang because he is given the true instructions to acquire wisdom which will direct him on the right way to go. *Bridgeway Bible Commentary* gives its comment on this passage in support of the research viewing it thus; The first cautioning concerns bad buddies, especially those who lead others amiss tempting them with the offer of instant prosperity through robbery and ferocity (Prov. 1: 10-14). The teacher hopes that the inexperienced young man, being cautioned, will not be caught by such attractions, just as a bird will not be trapped if it sees a trap being set for it (Prov. 1:15-17). (https://www.studylight.org/commentary/proverbs/1-18.html). In likewise manner those who find wealth through violence, following the ways of evil doers, in the end, will discover that their evil strategies bring about destruction on them (Prov. 1:18-19).

The Tiv proverb *"kwagh u nyen er kpev la a de kera eren iyôngo ga"* (that which happened to the he-goat should not repeat itself on the sheep) is much relevant here. The he-goat was trapped and slaughtered, so, if the sheep is not mindful of the trap in likewise manner it will be trapped and slain. This proverb sounds more of a warning to the youth who is enticed by evildoers (to follow their company). He is warned not to follow evil ways because in likewise manner he will meet his destruction as others have gone the same way. This means the enticement of sinners is to him like setting a trap in the sight of the bird, but he is now made to be aware of the danger ahead. The ways of evil men who are greedy take away their lives (Prov.1: 19), but this young man would be safe if he accepts this teaching and shun evil.

The Call of Lady Wisdom to choose Life or Death (Prov. 1: 20-33)

"Lady Wisdom is the most striking personification in the entire Bible" (Roland Murphy 133). Personification of wisdom in the book of Proverbs is very popular. CBE International explains why wisdom is personified with feminine gender, saying, "The association of divine wisdom with the feminine is not accidental. Social relationships in Israel reflected spiritual relationships between Israel and Yahweh. As a result of this basic analogy between the earthly realm and the heavenly realm, one can look to the feminine images of Hebrew Scriptures to better understand personified Wisdom" (https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/lady-wisdom/). The idea of personifying wisdom in Proverbs has made many scholars treat Proverbs 1: 20-33 in isolation to verses 8-19 of the same pericope. This research understands Proverbs 1: 20-33 as wisdom being personified in continuation with the instructions given to the naïve. In the *Storyteller's Companion to the Bible*, wisdom is explained in three ways, one of which is its personification by the sage for wisdom to speak by herself (29-30). Tim, Jon, and Carissa also aver that "Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly are both presented as shrewd and strategic (like the Serpent in the Garden), but they pursue shrewdness to different ends—to life and to death, respectively" (https://bibleproject.com/podcast/beginning-lady-wisdom/). One may either chose Lady Wisdom to live or Lady Folly to destruction. Lady wisdom cries in the streets and in public places; she speaks at the head of noisy streets and at the city's gates. Tim, Jon, and Carissa also add that Wisdom calls out to both the poor and the rich, which is part of the Genesis 1 picture of humanity. The lowly and the exalted equally embody the image of God (https://bibleproject.com/podcast/beginning-lady-wisdom/). They all need wisdom for a perfect relationship with God. The mention of these places where Lady Wisdom stands calling to those who want her indicates that wisdom is needed in everyday life, or maybe that she is public and not secretive (see also Prov. 1: 7, 8). One's end is determined by wisdom, for the end would surely bring its reward. Evil doers will also receive theirs with catastrophe, for they also are paid accordingly. Wisdom asks; "How long would the naïve love being naïve? How long would the scoffers delight in their scoffing, and fools hate knowledge? Proverbs 1: 23 continues with the call to turn and receive the spirit of wisdom which may also be translated "thought" since *ruach* can also mean "mind" or "thought" (Whybray 47).

This research observes that there is retribution going on in this section. The simple is remunerated according to his actions. If he does well he lives, but if he does evil, his reward is death. Therefore, Wisdom calls on the young man to turn to her and live, or reject her and die. The principle of retribution was a very common practice of the time, hence one was rewarded according to one's actions. If one did well, one was paid well, but when one did wrong one's reward was a bad one. A good example of retribution is captured here when Joseph's brothers blamed each other for the evil they did to him; "they said to one another, 'Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how

distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us'. Reuben replied, 'Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood'" (Gen 42:21-22 NIV). The call of Lady Wisdom is worth heeding to, because at the time of calamity she will laugh at the one who had rejected her (Prov. 1: 23-27). At the time of calamity, they that rejected wisdom shall call upon her but she will not answer them, because they hated knowledge and did not chose the fear of the Lord or listen to Lady Wisdom when she called (Prov. 1: 28-30). Perdue also adds that in times when fear and calamity engulf the simple, it would then be too late for him to seek the life-giving counsel of Lady Wisdom which he had previously rejected (82). The issue of life and death comes up clearly in the last three verses. The evildoers shall eat the fruit of their labor, for their evil will ruin them since they despised Lady Wisdom (Prov.1:31-32; Job 4:8; Gal.6:7-8). In contrast, those who listened to Lady Wisdom shall live safe and be at ease (Prov.1:33; cf. Deut.33:12, 28; Ps.102:28; Jer.23:6).

The Tiv too personified wisdom as if it were man. In an interview with Solomon Chiangi on Febuary 5, 2025 he maintained that "it was often said by the elders, '*wan wam, u venda mfe yô kper u ngor mliam kpa una kera ungwa u ga'* (my son, if you reject wisdom, tomorrow you will cry for help but it will not listen to you)". *Mfe* means wisdom. Though, an abstract noun, wisdom does appear in the neuter gender among the Tiv People. The Tiv never attached feminine gender to abstract nouns as it is the case with Old Testament Hebrew. They were always referenced in the neuter gender. Here, *mfe* is spoken of as if it were itself a person that would heed to one's cry when one calls unto it. Those who reject wisdom and follow folly would one day cry but wisdom would be gone and she would not listen to come to their aid.

Sages and Wisdom across Cultures

The book of Proverbs clearly expresses the relationship between God the Creator and his creation. Man is accountable to God in every aspect of life, and so, needs wisdom which will guide him day by day in his relationship with God and his fellow being. God does not wish that people do evil as was the case with Cain when he killed his brother, Abel, and God's punishment for him became too severe that he could not bear. Cain complained that he would be killed by anyone who met him and God put a mark on him (Gen. 4:15). James Freeman referring to the proverb "Mark of Cain" maintains that "In the past, perhaps more than now, the expression was used to speak of a person's evil nature such as 'He has the mark of Cain on him'" (6). This expression was used of people who with their naïve character followed the ways of evildoers to kill innocent people.

Proverbs do not in their contents show the covenantal relationship between God and his chosen Israel, but on a broader sense it has a covenantal relationship between God and all the peoples of the earth since wisdom is not meant only for Israel. Roland E. Murphy in

his quest for the origins of wisdom observed that before the nation Israel existed, Ptah-hotep the Egyptian sage wrote, "Good speech is more hidden than the emerald, but it may be found with maidservants at the grindstones" (4). Murphy's comment shows that wisdom existed before Israel. This is the reason why Lady Wisdom does not call only in Jerusalem, but also calls on the streets and in public squares so that all may heed her and live (Prov. 1: 20-22).

Personification of wisdom and her work in the pericope of this research and the rest of the book of Proverbs points us to the prophets of the Old Testament who stood in the place of God to reveal His will to the children of Israel (Williams 30). "The pouring of the spirit" (Prov. 1: 23) is similar to the prophecy of Isaiah 11:2; 44:3 and Joel 2:28. The pronouncement of doom in Proverbs 1: 24-27 is similar to the promised judgment by God to the children of Israel for rejecting the demands of the covenant stipulations (Deut.29:18-28; 30). The offer of life and death and the promise of deliverance from misfortune in Proverbs 1: 31-33 also reflect what is said in Deuteronomy 30:15-20 and Isaiah 55:6-11 where God had set life and prosperity, death and destruction before his people to either do good and live or do evil and die.

Another important concern here is the person of Lady Wisdom because of her exalted claims. She is to be loved, is more precious than rubies, long life is in her hand, and the Lord laid the foundation of the earth by her (Prov.3:15-18). She also announces a feast just as the feast announced by Jesus (Prov. 9:4-6; cf. John 4:10; 7:37; Rev. 22:17). Derek Kidner in "*An introduction to Wisdom Literature: The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job & Ecclesiastes"* also works on this question of the exalted personality of Lady Wisdom. His concern is to whether she is presented to us as a member of the angelic hierarchy or only as an idea personified (23). Kidner further points out that though this kind of language is destined to prepare a way for New Testament's Christology; in its own context it is only personifying a concept and not a description of a personality (23). The research also agrees with Kidner on this view, because, there is much to say about wisdom in relation to Christ as portrayed in the verses above, but one has to be very careful in stepping up to the conclusion metaphorically that Lady Wisdom is Jesus Christ.

Jane S. Webster also deals with this issue of personifying wisdom. She says there are many ways people have understood this concept of Lady Wisdom. Feminist theologians have taken it as a source for feminine images and/or reflection of God. Christian theologians have connected her with the wisdom traditions found in the Gospels, and it has become an important factor in the discourse on Christology. Others reflect on it in a social or political context and still others as simply a reflection of grammatical gender (63-79). The different views here have limitations in discussing Lady Wisdom. It is wrong to use personification of wisdom as a reflection of God for His wisdom is greater than we can imagine, and wisdom is only one of the attributes of God. Also, we should not take it to reflect only on political issues and social life since nations have rejected wisdom in politics and social

endeavors. It is also wrong to take it as simply a reflection of grammatical gender, because wisdom in itself goes beyond grammatical gender. It exists and is needed in everyday life for nations and individuals to excel.

Again, Bruce K. Waltke in his article "*Lady Wisdom as a Mediatrix: An Exposition of Proverbs 1:20-33*" discusses the error of Bultmann who considers Wisdom as a goddess in the "old myth of wisdom" in Proverbs 1:20-23; Job 28; Sirach 24:1-11 etc. He reconstructs the myth and maintains that the Pre-existed Wisdom, the companion of God at creation sought her dwelling on earth with men but they rejected her. She came to her own but was rejected, so she returned to the heavenly world and hid. Mankind truly seeks her now but none finds her, God alone knows the way to her (1-15). This view has been refuted by Waltke who says that Proverbs 1:20-33 does not present such a myth without radical review of the text. The reconstruction of Bultmann is found only in Ethiopic Enoch, and no documentation for such a myth is found in extra-Israelite literature (1-15). Bultmann's view seems to equate wisdom with God. In a sense he takes the claims of Lady Wisdom literally and so lands into the trouble of making Lady Wisdom a divine being. This research observes that some people have misunderstood the purpose of Wisdom literature in the Bible. God intended wisdom to be a guide to mankind in all aspects of life, and most of all to teach mankind how it is not possible for one to attain the highest goal in life without Him.

The work of the sages across the globe then becomes paramour since people need wisdom for them to live successful lives. Men need to also understand that wisdom comes from God; he gives as he so wishes to men who truly seek him. The wise sayings of the sages would teach, instruct and direct the youth to the fear of God. God controls everything by His own wisdom. Proverbs is very clear about this when it says "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov.1:7). This message of Proverbs is also confirmed in Jesus' teaching when he said "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt.6:33 NIV). The fear of God is to be the highest goal in one's life.

Conclusion

The theological implication of this pericope cannot be undermined as this research has highlighted the essence of the teaching by both the Hebrews and the Tiv sages and the concept of Lady Wisdom in wisdom literature. As stated above Proverbs 1:8-33 is about the relationship between God and man, and in this case the sinner who is on his way to destruction. The following points support this assertion.

1. The exalted nature of Lady Wisdom shows how man needs God in his life. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Prov.1:7; 8:13; 9:10; 15:33; Job 23:15; Isa.33:6). It gives right discernment of Judgment (1Kings 3:16-28), genuine wealth, and many more as mentioned in Proverbs 8:12-36. The naïve who seeks

to know and fear God would pursue wisdom as it directs and affirms the right way one should follow to discern God and fear him.

2. Wisdom was brought forth by God (Prov.22:30). She should not be taken to mean Christ in pre-incarnation. If one holds to this kind of interpretation, one would automatically get into the error of Arius who said the Son was created; he had a beginning, and "there was a time when he was not" (Kelly 227-228). Christ was not created. He is of the same substance and essence as God the Father. John 1: 1 says he was in the beginning with God and all things were made by him and for him and through him.
3. In this pericope, through Lady Wisdom, God reveals the essential understanding on how one would come to know Him. By God's wisdom he created all things (Prov.8:30; cf. Gen.1:1ff; Job 38:4-41:34). Although God is transcendent, He is imminent as well, calling the Simple to open his heart and accept Him so that he would have formation of true character that leads to true virtue. This also reflects Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about the ethics of the kingdom of God (Mt.5:1-7:29). God, through Jesus Christ seeks sinners to bring them back to Him. This has its portrait in the Hebrews and Tiv proverbs. Jesus' call "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28 NIV) refers to the Simple. Those who listen and come to him shall have life eternal.
4. The feast of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 9:4-6 is also pointing to the divine feast of the Lamb of God. Christ invites all to His divine feast to come and eat and drink for free (John 4:10; 7:37; Rev.22:17). Those who come to God through Jesus Christ shall have satisfaction of the heart in this life, and would gaze at the face of Christ when he comes the second time.

Recommendations

This work has examined how Biblical proverbs and the Tiv proverbs are both used to train up the child in his or her youthful stage to become useful to the society. It explores how all peoples of the earth celebrated the wisdom of their sages including the Tiv of North Central Nigeria. In conclusion this work has the following recommendations for its readers.

1. God owns everything including wisdom. He has given us wisdom literature in scripture to teach us how great He is, and to guide us in day to day activities in our lives. By His wisdom political leaders will lead; art, science, and all kinds of works shall be done. Political leaders and all leaders of human endeavors should pursue wisdom for them to excel in all that they do.
2. Biblical sages trained their youth in the way of the Lord. The Tiv sages taught their children to fear God and love their fellow neighbor, yet, they had not known

Christ. The light has shone today and Tiv have also accepted Christ as the word of God is been given to Tiv community. Therefore, Tiv proverbs could as well be alloyed to the biblical proverbs to be used as a good resource of wisdom sayings that lead one to Christ.

3. In Prov. 1:20-33 Woman Wisdom speaks like a prophet, crying aloud in the streets and at the city gates, issuing reproaches, warnings, and promises with prophetic authority (https://enterthebible.org/passage/proverbs-120-33-the-call-of-woman-wisdom). The idea of two ladies in the book of proverbs is highly demanding, for the fear of God through faith in Christ leads one to life everlasting. Lady Wisdom demands that one should love her and live, while Lady Folly also extends her loving hands to the naïve who in turn loves her and meets his destruction. Without faith in Christ all wisdom and works done no matter how good they are shall not lead to the highest goal, namely; the kingdom of God.

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