



### **Wisdom Work Group**

Presentations and Tentative Schedule

Nov. 17, 2016

Brite Divinity School's Bass Conference Center  
First Floor, Harrison Building

Dr. Mark Sneed (Lubbock Christian University)

The brilliance of von Rad was hampered by the contemporary paradigm, still lingering within OT Studies, that views the wisdom literature as reflecting a specific professional group of wisdom teachers, who mainly or solely composed in this mode of literature, often misleadingly described as a tradition. The paradigm also distorts his actually largely correct intuition that apocalyptic literature stems from the wisdom "tradition." I will suggest that the wisdom writers were interested in all forms of divination, from the very beginning, not just near the end. Almost all of these problematic assumptions stem from the improper use of the argument from silence, which easily becomes fallacious. I will also explore how his view of Woman Wisdom as a primordial order that appeals to the sages is fraught with all kinds of problems, especially androcentric notions. I will suggest that his intuitive view that "wisdom" is compatible with Yahwism is quite positive, and I will position this perspective within my deconstruction of the notion of a wisdom "tradition."

Dr. George J. Brooke (Manchester)

"Von Rad's *Wisdom in Israel* in the light of the Wisdom Literature from the Qumran Caves." This presentation will consider how the Qumran Wisdom texts indicate trajectories in the development of wisdom literature in the late Second Temple period that von Rad's work only partially anticipates. Attention will be drawn in

particular to the new place of Torah in wisdom, to the role of revelation alongside experience, and to several didactic elements.

Dr. Ariel Feldman (Brite Divinity School/TCU)

“The Book of Ecclesiastes in Second Temple Jewish Literature.” In *Wisdom in Israel* Gerhard von Rad observes that the book of Ecclesiastes failed to leave a significant mark on the late Second Temple Wisdom literature. In attempt to gauge the impact Koheleth had on contemporary Second Temple Jewish texts, the present paper explores the uses of Ecclesiastes in the literature of Early Judaism with a particular attention to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Dr. Christl M. Maier (Marburg)

“Wisdom and Women - Wisdom of Women.” Many proverbs and wisdom texts seem to formulate timeless truths about human behavior. Yet, a closer look reveals that their portrayals of men and women present cultural stereotypes of a particular time and context. Feminist interpretations of the female figures in biblical wisdom texts challenge this social order and analyze the roles of women in the production of wisdom.

Dr. Ann Stewart (Princeton Theological Seminary)

“Proverbs, Poetry, and Pedagogy.” The significance of the poetic form of Proverbs is often unappreciated. As Gerhard von Rad insisted, the poetic form of Proverbs “cannot be separated from the intellectual process as if it were something added later; rather, perception takes place precisely in and with the poetic composition.” But how exactly does this intellectual process unfold? And what does poetry have to do with it?

Dr. Klaus-Peter Adam (Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago)

“Wisdom as rules for ‘the correct social behavior’? Conflict settlement in Proverbs.” In the fifth chapter of his book *Wisdom in Israel* von Rad considers “The significance of orders for correct social behavior.” In a twofold hermeneutic on wisdom literature von Rad on the one side concedes the lack of any explicit rooting of orders in Yahwism (p. 90). At the same time with a high trust in wisdom literature as source for the historical reconstruction of social worlds, von Rad suggests a close relation between wisdom and the Israelite ethos. The lack of a clear-cut religious quality in Proverbs and the Biblical theologian’s disappointment about wisdom falling short of an “unambiguously theonomous” ethos seemingly give way to a fascination about the possibilities of reconstructing social worlds based on wisdom

texts. The paper takes von Rad's hermeneutics as a starting point and probes the reading of wisdom as a source for the reconstruction of social worlds. It specifically ponders whether and how Proverbs reflects scenarios of conflict settlement: What role do private relationships between opponents play, how do proverbs present hate, personal strife and the inability to reconcile as part of the social reality? After an overview on the constructs of private hate (von Rad p. 89), neighborly life (von Rad, p. 82-83), private friendship and honor (von Rad p. 82-83) I focus on instruction, mediation, and rebuke in disputes, as well as on the "scoffer."

Dr. Timothy J. Sandoval (Brite Divinity School)

In *Wisdom in Israel* von Rad contends an early pansacralism in Israel gave way to an enlightened spirit out of which wisdom writers produced their texts. This account reflects a modern interpretive tension in wisdom studies and it is evident in particular in von Rad's account of Proverbs' moral language. On the one hand, he describes this discourse in terms of modern, largely post Kantian/deontological ethics; on the other hand von Rad the expert exegete, Christian theologian, and learned scholar of the ancient world recognizes Proverbs' moral rhetoric regularly presupposes premodern modes of moral reflection. My presentation will offer several theses that seek to suggest 1. How and why wisdom (especially Proverbs' scholarship) came to characterize (and thereby somewhat caricature) Proverbs' moral vision in terms of modern moral categories; 2. How Proverbs moral discourse might be imagined afresh in light of ancient, virtue oriented moral traditions that in part ground wisdom morality in the created world, and 3. How Proverbs itself presents (and interpreters might understand) the book's moral discourse in a way that mitigates—somewhat—problematic aspects of appeals to concepts such as Natural Law by which to understand Proverbs, concepts that only in part apply to the book.