

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: ITS WISDOM AFFINITIES AND THEIR RELATION TO ITS STRUCTURE

Gary A. Tuttle*

One area of Biblical studies in which scholars have exercised themselves recently is concerned with the relationship of the OT wisdom corpus to other portions of the Hebrew canon. The lion's share of attention has been paid the major prophets,¹ though the minor prophets have received a fair share,² while OT narrative literature has not suffered from neglect,³ nor have extracanonical books.⁴ Aspects of wisdom literature and the NT have received attention.⁵ Some work

*Gary Tuttle is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Near Eastern languages and literatures at Yale University.

¹J. Fichtner, "Jesaja unter den Weisen," *TLZ* 74 (1949) 75-80 (now translated as "Isaiah among the Wise," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* [ed. J. L. Crenshaw; New York: KTAV, 1976] 429-438); J. Lindblom, "Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets," *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (ed. M. Noth and D. W. Thomas; Leiden: Brill, 1955) 192-204; R. T. Anderson, "Was Isaiah a Scribe?," *JBL* 79 (1960) 57-58; R. Fey, *Amos and Jesaja* (WMANT 12; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1963); W. McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men* (SBT 44; London: SCM, 1965); E. Gerstenberger, "The Woe Oracles of the Prophets," *JBL* 81 (1962) 249-263; J. W. Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); D. A. Hubbard, "Wisdom and Her Children—Thoughts on the Methods and Influence of Israel's Wise Men," paper presented to the SOTS (London, 1971).

²S. Terrien, "Amos and Wisdom," *Israel's Prophetic Heritage* (ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson; New York: Harper, 1962) 108-115; R. Fey, *Amos und Jesaja*; H. W. Wolff, *Amos' Geistige Heimat* (WMANT 18; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964; now available in translation as *Amos the Prophet* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973]); J. L. Crenshaw, "The Influence of the Wise upon Amos," *ZAW* 79 (1967) 42-52; P. L. Tribble, "Studies in the Book of Jonah" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1964); D. E. Gowan, "Habakkuk and Wisdom," *Perspective* 9 (1968) 157-166; G. A. Tuttle, "Wisdom and Habakkuk," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 3 (1971) 3-14.

³G. von Rad, "The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966) 292-300; J. L. McKenzie, "Reflections on Wisdom," *JBL* 86 (1967) 1-9; L. Alonso-Schökel, "Motivos sapienciales y de alianza en Gen 2-3," *Bib* 43 (1962) 295-315 (now available in translation as "Sapiential and Covenant Themes in Genesis 2-3" in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* [ed. Crenshaw] 468-480); S. Talmon, "'Wisdom' in the Book of Esther," *VT* 13 (1963) 419-455; M. Weinfeld, "The Dependence of Deuteronomy upon the Wisdom Literature," *Yehezkel Kaufmann Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1960) 89-108; J. L. Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon Historical Literature," *JBL* 88 (1969) 129-142; George Coats, "The Joseph Story and Ancient Wisdom: A Reappraisal," *CBQ* 38 (1973) 285-297.

⁴See, e. g., R. A. Coughenour, *Enoch and Wisdom, A Study of the Wisdom Elements in the Book of Enoch* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1972); A. A. DiLella, "Conservative and Progressive Theology: Sirach and Wisdom," *CBQ* 38 (1966) 139-154; G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972); G. T. Sheppard, "Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1977); W. R. Shoedel, "Jewish Wisdom and the Formation of the Christian Ascetic," *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. R. L. Wilkin; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1975) 169-199.

⁵*Inter alia* we may cite G. Fohrer, "Sophia," *TDNT* 7, pp. 465-526; T. Mullins, "Jewish Wisdom Literature in the New Testament," *JBL* 68 (1949) 335-339; J. L. McKenzie, "Reflections"; R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (London: Blackwell, 1963); W. A. Beardslee, "Uses of the Proverb in the Synoptic Gospels," *Int* 24 (1970) 66-73; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Harper, 1967); D. A. Hubbard, "The Wisdom Movement and Israel's Covenant Faith," *TB* 17 (1966) 3-33; J. A. Kirk, "The Meaning of Wisdom in James: Examination of a Hypothesis," *NTS* 16 (1969-70) 24-38; James Wood, *Wisdom*

has been done on the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7),⁶ but apparently nothing that connects the wisdom features to the structure of the discourse. It is this relation we seek to elucidate in this paper.

There can be no doubt that in its present redaction the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew is presented as having a didactic character. The narrator's introduction (5:1-2) and conclusion (7:28-29) cast the sermon in a didactic framework. The passages read:

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: . . .

And when Jesus finished these sayings the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

In both cases it is said that Jesus "taught," and the intervening material is clearly characterized as "teaching." In prospect and retrospect the sermon is construed as having a didactic function. Such a view motivates an inquiry into the character of this didactic literature and what relation, if any, exists between it and other didactic literature, notably Israel's wisdom literature. It is our purpose to show not only that features typical of Israel's wisdom are pervasive in the sermon but that the final call to attention and obedience in 7:24-27 is a wisdom speech and contains a key to the structure of the sermon.

In 7:24-27, in an extended antithetical simile, Jesus compares the wise, who hear and do his words, with the foolish, who hear them but do not do them. A number of observations pertinent to our inquiry can be made. First, the passage in question is a comparison; second, it is fundamentally antithetical, with the wise and foolish as subjects; third, each half is itself a simile; fourth, the focus is on performance. All of these components have clear parallels in the OT wisdom corpus and, although none taken in isolation would necessarily provide a compelling argument, when taken together the cumulative effect is to suggest quite decisively that Matt 7:24-27 is wisdom speech. Comparison speech is, of course, pervasive in the OT wisdom literature, but certainly the scribes had no corner on that literary market. Similarly, simile is a favorite device, though not unique to the wise men. Finally, antithetical parallelism is a typical way for the scribes to couch their comparison. Even this, however, is not solely in their domain. But the matter is not limited to form alone. Content is also involved, as is function. When the literary (or rhetorical) techniques noted above are infused with

Literature: An Introduction (London: Duckworth, 1967); J. M. Robinson, "Jesus as Sophos and Sophia: Wisdom Tradition and the Gospels," *Aspects of Wisdom* (ed. Wilkin) 1-16; E. S. Fiorenza, "Wisdom Mythology and the Christological Hymns of the NT," *ibid.*, pp. 17-41; B. A. Pearson, "Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Paul," *ibid.*, pp. 43-66.

⁶The bibliography of studies on the Sermon on the Mount is massive. An adequate summary of research is presented in W. S. Kissinger, *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1975) 1-125. Kissinger's bibliography, though quite complete, is listed alphabetically according to author, and so is less useful than it might have been had it been cross-indexed—by topic and passage, at least.

a particular content—namely, the wise and foolish—we move predominantly into the realm of the sage and, when that speech is intended not only to elicit an attentive hearing but to induce right behavior, we are more certainly there. Now let us look at these elements in more detail.

Jesus' final assertions may be described, using a geometric metaphor, as an ellipse, insofar as they have two foci—hearing and doing—while the constant representing the sum of the distance between the foci is the content of the teaching itself, namely, “my words.” Jesus expects everyone, wise and foolish, to hear, but the true nature of the individual is expressed in his behavior; the wisdom is in the performance, and life is at stake. So also in Proverbs all men are addressed and exhorted to be attentive to wisdom. The proverbs were collected “that men may know wisdom and instruction (1:2) . . . , that prudence may be given to the simple (1:4) . . . , (that) the wise man also may hear and increase in learning” (1:5). These same reasons are frequently invoked, particularly in the earlier chapters of Proverbs, as the grounds for summoning the “son(s)” to pay attention to instruction and adhere to its precepts. For example; “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and reject not your mother’s teaching” (1:8; cf. also 6:20); “my son, keep sound wisdom and discretion, let them not escape from your sight” (3:21); “hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching” (4:1-2); “my son, be attentive to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding” (5:1); “and now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth” (7:24). Wisdom herself calls in 1:22-23; 8:4-7, 10, 11, 32-36, and sends her maidens to summon the simple (9:3-6). But more is at stake than simply “increased learning.” As with Jesus’ call, the objective is knowledge of God and life itself, as the following examples show:

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you . . . then you will find the knowledge of God (2:1, 5).

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare will they give you (3:1-2).

Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many . . . ; keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life (4:10, 13).

My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live (7:1-2a).

The specific wise-foolish comparison evident in Matt 7:24-27, structured in terms of antithetical parallelism, is quite common in Proverbs. There are nearly two dozen examples where the comparison is made in one aspect or another⁷—from a reflection on the effect a son’s

⁷Prov 10:1, 5, 8, 14, 17; 12:15; 13:1, 13; 14:16, 24, 33; 15:2, 5, 7, 14, 20, 21, 32; 17:24; 21:20; 28:26; 29:11.

wisdom or foolishness has on his parents (10:1) to the profound effect of wisdom or folly on its possessor (e. g., 10:17; 13:13). According to Matt 7:24-27, the outcome of wisdom or foolishness is security or preservation. The wise are secure in the day of adversity, but the foolish come to ruin. This same outcome is articulated throughout Proverbs. Several of the passages quoted above state quite clearly that the result of securing wisdom is to gain life (3:1-2; 4:10, 13; 7:1-2a). The clear implication is that foolishness brings destruction. This relationship is made explicit both in the speeches by Wisdom and in some of the antithetical comparison proverbs. For example, the concluding remarks in Wisdom's speech in 1:32-33 state:

For the simple are killed by their turning away,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;
but he who listens to me will dwell secure
and will be at ease, without dread of evil.

So also is the thrust of the conclusion to Wisdom's speech in chap. 8:

For he who finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the LORD,
but he who misses me injures himself.
All who hate me love death (8:35-36).

In the same vein, a similar conclusion is found in chap. 9. The maidens, speaking on Wisdom's behalf, say, "Leave simpleness, and live" (9:6). Or again, "For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life" (9:11). The corollary to 9:11 is illustrated by the case of the simpleton who is enticed into the wanton woman's house: "He does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol." Finally, we may note a few of the antithetical proverbs that compare the fates of the wise and foolish. In terms of the fool's outcome, we read in 10:14, "Wise men lay up knowledge, but the babbling of a fool brings ruin near."⁸ As for the wise, it is said, "He who trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered" (28:26). In a perfectly balanced antithesis the fates of both are specified: "He who heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof goes astray."⁹

The fool's destruction is framed in Matt 7:27 in terms of the demolition of his house by storm. Such language is also found in Proverbs. For example, in 1:26-27, in reference to the fool who rejects her teaching, Wisdom says:

I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when panic strikes you,
when panic strikes you like a storm
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come upon you.

⁸Cf. also 19:3 and 24:16.

⁹10:17; cf. also 13:13 and 10:8.

On the other hand, of the wise we read:

By wisdom a house is built,
and by understanding it is established;
By knowledge the rooms are filled
with all precious and pleasant riches (24:4).

In a similar vein we may cite 14:1: "Wisdom builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down." Apropos also are those proverbs which treat of the wicked and the righteous. But before relating them to Jesus' conclusion, a slight digression is necessary.

The antithetical proverbs comparing the wicked and righteous form a complement to those treating the wise and foolish, and together they form what is called the "doctrine of the two ways."¹⁰ Simply stated the doctrine is that wisdom compels righteousness, which leads to life, while foolishness leads to wickedness, which results in death. A number of proverbs explicitly make the connection between wisdom and righteousness and between folly and wickedness. For example, 23:24 says, "The father of the righteous will rejoice greatly; he who begets a wise son will be glad in him." The synonymous parallelism makes it clear that the wise son and righteous scion are the same person. Or again, in 4:11 we read, "I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of righteousness." Clearly the way of wisdom is the path of righteousness. Moreover, in chap. 2 there is an extended apologetic for heeding wisdom that makes a similar equation. The argument goes, "If you are attentive to wisdom" (2:2), "then you will understand the fear of the Lord" (2:5a); "he (God) stores up sound wisdom for the upright" (2:7). "Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul" (2:9-10). Similarly, in 23:15-16 we find:

My son, if your heart is wise	A
my heart too will be glad;	B
My soul will rejoice	B
when your lips speak what is right.	C

Here we may represent the argument symbolically thus: $A \rightarrow B^{11}$ and $B \rightarrow C$, therefore $A \rightarrow C$. We have a pair of conditional sentences, the apodoses to which are identical. The same causative relationship exists in each case between the protasis and the apodosis. Therefore the apodoses are equivalent. Once more, therefore, we have an identification of the wise and righteous.¹²

On the other side of the scale, there are proverbs that associate evil and folly. For example, "The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to men" (24:8). The association of foolishness and

¹⁰Cf. *hodos* in *TDNT* 6, p. 57, and *Did.*

¹¹ \rightarrow = "implies."

¹²See also Prov 9:9, where "wise man" is parallel to "righteous man."

evil is also apparent in 30:32: "If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth." Once again we have a conditional setup similar to that in 23:15-16 discussed above. Here $A \rightarrow C$ and $B \rightarrow C$, therefore $A \leftrightarrow B$. The two protases have the same apodosis and stand in the same logical relation to it; therefore the protases are equivalent.¹³ Finally, we may cite 14:16, which may serve as an epitome of the relationship we have been setting forth: "A wise man fears and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and trusts (it)."

Having established the relationship between the way of the wise/foolish and the way of the righteous/wicked, we may turn our attention once more to the outcome of behavior informed by those dispositions, this time focusing on the latter pair *vis à vis* the house and storm symbolism used by Jesus in Matthew 7. For example, in 10:24-25 we find:

What the wicked dreads will come upon him,
but the desire of the righteous will be granted.
When the tempest passes the wicked is no more,
but the righteous is established forever.

Here the context is clearly the fate of the wicked, and the metaphor of adversity is the storm.¹⁴ The house metaphor calls to mind 12:7: "The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand." With reference to the wicked, we read in 21:12: "The righteous observes the house of the wicked; the wicked are cast down to ruin." Finally we point to 14:11, which one might call the *locus classicus* of this wisdom motif: "The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish."

From the preceding discussion it appears that the statements by Jesus in Matt 7:24-27 have clear affinities with the wisdom literature of the OT, notably Proverbs, and may in fact be called wisdom speech. In all aspects—form, language, content and intent—it must be classified as wisdom. What is the significance of this fact? Shall we say Jesus is a wise man? Shall we call the sermon wisdom literature? Shall we say the gospel of Matthew exhibits wisdom influence? One must be extremely careful in extrapolating from a given passage that exhibits certain wisdom traits to a larger literary unit, and certainly a facile equation of the part with the whole is illegitimate. Clearly further investigation is required, and this we propose to do; but so that our inquiry will not lack focus, we put forth a preliminary hypothesis that we can test in our investigation.

The fact that this wisdom speech of Jesus is the *concluding* remark in the sermon may be particularly significant as concerns the present shape of the sermon. Whether Jesus originally spoke those discourses in the order they now are presented literarily is not germane, for ours is not an exercise in reconstructing a pre-literary stage but in under-

¹³For a connection of the wicked with the lack of knowledge, i.e., absence of wisdom which constitutes folly, see Prov 29:7.

¹⁴Cf. also the general statements in 10:30 and 14:42.

standing the Biblical data in its present shape. Our question is this: Is the placement of the wise-foolish contrast at the end of the sermon somehow significant in the present redaction for an understanding of the sermon as a whole? We suggest it is and propose that within this homily is the structural key to the sermon. By and large the sermon is organized along the lines of the doctrine of the two ways dichotomy.

There are quite a number of passages in Matt 5-7 that have an explicit antithetical structure. Two large blocks of material are obviously arranged in this manner: 5:17-47 and 6:1-21. Jesus begins his discourse on the law in 5:17 with an antithetical statement, "I have not come to abolish the law and prophets; I have come to fulfil them." He then asserts that nothing shall pass from the law until all is accomplished (5:18), after which he makes a statement about those who do and teach the law:

Whoever, then, relaxes one of the least of the commandments	A
and teaches men so	B
shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven;	C
but he who does (them)	—A
and teaches (them)	B
shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (5:19-20).	—C

The structure here is similar to that of the passage in 7:24-27 and, as in the latter passage, lays the emphasis on performance. The negative aspect is articulated first here (as opposed to the description of the wise coming first in 7:24)—"he who relaxes the commandment will be called least." Then the antithesis is stated (somewhat more succinctly since the objects are known)—"he who does the commandment will be called great." Then in v 20, by a comparison to an institution familiar to his audience, Jesus gives a programmatic statement of what "doing the law" will mean. What follows in vv 21-47 is a series of examples that are each introduced with antithetical statements: "You have heard it said . . . , but I say . . ." The contrast is also between "men of old" and "you" (present now). The subject matter that Jesus is quoting is law and he offers a radicalizing and internalizing of it, a new interpretation and thoroughness of application. The law and its interpretation cannot be seen precisely as antithetical, for Jesus is not discarding the one and advocating the other. Rather, the antithesis is in respect of what the law means in terms of human conduct. The implication from the concluding remark in v 20 is, to paraphrase, "you have seen the scribes and Pharisees perform, but I say your righteousness must exceed theirs." What is wrong is not the law but the application of the law.

Although the content may be broadly labeled "law," this discourse by Jesus is not without its wisdom features. These features are seen primarily in the method, i. e., the structure whose antithetical rubric we have mentioned. There are, however, a few parallels in the content that require mention. We focus on the first section of the discourse (5:21-26). After the law-quote (5:21), Jesus gives his interpretation framed in memorable parallelism (camouflaged by the printing in *RSV*) with an interesting chiasm in the last two lines between the quote and the prepositional phrase, "to his brother":

Everyone who is angry with his brother,	liable shall he be to judgment;
whoever says to his brother, "Raca,"	liable shall he be to the council;
whoever says, "Fool," to his brother,	liable shall he be to the hell of fire.

What follows is an illustration of Jesus' meaning, drawn from everyday life. Some of Jesus' statements bear a proverbial stamp; e. g., "First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." The structure here too is antithetical: "Leave gift, go; be reconciled, offer gift" (again we note the chiasmic structure). A more extended proverbial warning follows in 5:25. Interesting parallels to the caution about litigation expressed by Jesus in this homily are found in Proverbs:

Argue your case with your neighbor himself,
and do not disclose another's secret,
lest he who hears you brings shame upon you
and your ill repute have no end (25:9).

Then do this, my son, and save yourself,
for you have come into your neighbor's power;
go, hasten and importune your neighbor (6:3).

The context of the second of these passages regards suretyship and some verbal impropriety which has left one open either to prosecution or defamation by one's neighbor. To avoid the danger, the advice given is similar to Jesus' "Go and be reconciled to your brother" (where "brother" is obviously to be taken generally). In the Proverbs 25 passage, advice in the same vein as Jesus' "Make friends quickly with your accuser" is given.

The second section of Jesus' discourse (5:27-30) also reflects a wisdom feature in the way the argument is framed. In the comment, "It is better that you lose one of your members, than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (vv 29, 30), a structure very familiar from the wisdom literature is evident, though not the precise content. There are at least thirteen comparative proverbs of the "better than" variety in Proverbs¹⁵ and another twenty in Sirach.¹⁶ The structure varies widely—from a comparison in each of two parallel stichoi, e. g., "Death is better than a miserable life and eternal rest than chronic sickness" (Sir 30:17), to two conditions on both sides of the fulcrum, e. g., "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it" (Prov 15:17), to a comparison of one thing with two, e. g., "Riches and strength lift up the heart, but the fear of the Lord is better than both" (Sir 40:26), to a single element on one side of the proverbial scale compared to a single element on the other, e. g., "Better is open rebuke than hidden love" (Prov 27:5). The "better than" saying in Matt 5:29, 30 is of this last variety—the more forceful, perhaps, for its simplicity (and the repetition). This saying serves in Matthew as a summary conclusion to two examples of Jesus' instruction in this pericope, i. e., "You shall not commit adultery." A part of Prov 27:10 is used in a similar way in its context. It reads:

¹⁵12:9; 15:16, 17; 16:8, 19; 17:7; 19:1; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:5, 10; 28:6.

¹⁶10:27; 20:18, 31; 29:22, 30:14, 15, 17; 33:21; 40:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28; 41:15; 42:14.

Your friend and your father's friend
do not forsake,
but do not go to your brother's house
in the day of your calamity.
Better is one dwelling near
than a brother far away.

Here the "better than" proverb serves as a pithy concluding summary of the somewhat longer preceding instruction.

The third section (5:31-32) breaks the pattern in omitting the hypothetical illustrations introduced by "if." Rather, there is simply the bare antithesis of what has been heard and what Jesus says. The fourth section (5:33-37) follows suit in omitting examples of the variety found in sections one and two but has an extended interpretation in which the simple dictum, "Do not swear at all," is supported by explicit parallel injunctions against things whereby one might swear:

	either	by heaven,	for it is the throne of God;
	or	by earth,	for it is his footstool;
	or	by Jerusalem,	for it is the city of the great King.
And do not swear	by your head,		for you cannot make one hair white or black.

There is an interesting movement on the left side of these statements that may be described as concentric circles or an inverted cone. The movement is from great to small, from high to low, from expansive to individualistic. The focus, therefore, is on the individual; nothing is to back up his testimony but his character. In the final analysis his choices are limited to the basic antithesis of "yes" and "no," consonant, once more, with the emerging structure of the whole sermon.

In section five (5:38-42) the assertion, "Do not resist one who is evil," is followed by three mundane examples drawn from contemporary life. Those in turn are followed by a concluding proverb in synonymous parallelism: "Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you." There are several prototypes for this proverb, better ones in Sirach than in Proverbs.¹⁷ Sir 4:1-6 discusses one's duty to the poor. The argument is encapsulated in the following proverb: "Do not reject an afflicted suppliant nor turn your face away from the poor" (4:4). In Sir 29:1-3 a discourse on borrowing and lending is found, which sets forth the requirement: "Lend to your neighbor in the time of his need and, in turn, repay your neighbor promptly," then articulates the reasons why "many have refused to lend" (29:7), but concludes by reasserting the requirement: "Help a poor man for the commandment's sake, and because of his need do not send him away empty"¹⁸ (29:9). Prov 24:29 provides a negative statement of the same principle, given to thwart the common tendency of the injured party: "Do not say, 'I will do to him as he has done to me, I will pay the man back for what

¹⁷28:27; 19:17; 14:31; 11:24-25; cf. Luke 6:38.

¹⁸In the Lukan account the "golden rule" follows this section on giving and borrowing: "And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them."

he has done.' " Jesus' statement turns the admonition around and addresses the potential injurer, with the obvious intention of implying that compliance would be in one's own self-interest, another appeal frequent in Proverbs.¹⁹

We come finally to the last section (5:43-48) in this major discourse, the touchstone of which is, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." The purpose of this disposition is "so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." The ground for this assertion is stated in neat parallel merism with chiasm:

For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good,	a b c d
and sends rain on the just and the unjust.	a' b' d' c'

Other grounds are given in the form of rhetorical questions (vv 46-47), and then the conclusion is given: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (v 48). This is actually a more general statement than "Love your enemies," for it describes the mental and spiritual attitude that should culminate in the behavior of loving enemies and praying for persecutors. One might argue, in fact, that this section is a summary of the entire discourse and that therefore this last sentence is a summary of the principles that have been articulated.

Again in this last section teaching techniques are used that are reminiscent of wisdom; indeed, some of the content may also be paralleled. The touchstone of this section, mentioned above, is not without an antecedent in Proverbs. The principle stated here is framed there in practical terms:

If your enemy is hungry,	give him bread to eat;
if he is thirsty,	give him water to drink (25:21).

However, the result (and ground) of the action called for in Proverbs is somewhat more crassly stated than the result proposed by Jesus: "For you will heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord will reward you" (25:22), although the idea of reward is not missing from the result Jesus articulates in v 45a (and is confirmed in the rhetorical question of v 46a). Comment about the plight of the enemy is omitted from Jesus' discourse (though it is, perhaps, to be construed as the antithesis of what "you" become). The seventh beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers . . ." (Matt 5:9), summarizes in another form the teaching of this section; or, taken the other way around, this section expositis the beatitude.

The rhetorical question referred to above is also a common wisdom feature, especially the rhetorical question that anticipates a particular response. In 5:46, 47 four such questions are asked, the answers to which are obvious:

For if you love those who love you,	Answer: None.
what reward have you?	: Yes.
Do not even the tax collectors do the same?	: No more.
And if you salute only your brethren,	: Yes.
what more are you doing than others?	
Do not even the Gentiles do the same?	

¹⁹Cf. also Sir 7:1-3.

By asking these questions a common ground of agreement is achieved and one cannot but assent to the conclusion drawn. In order to be rewarded one must do more than tax collectors and Gentiles, more than the common expectation—one must be perfect. A similar kind of argument is found in chap. 7, in the section dealing with false prophets (7:15-20) who can be known by their fruits:

Are grapes gathered from thorns?	Answer: No.
or figs	: No.
from thistles?	

When the question is asked, the ground of agreement is established and the analogy to false prophets and their work can be made without objection. Thus not only is the teaching more easily remembered because of the rhetorical device used, but affirmation of its truth is assured by the same method. Jesus makes fairly extensive use of this method. Further examples occur in 6:25b, 26b, 27; 7:3, 4, 9, 10. In each case the answer is obvious and forms a ground of agreement that clinches the argument.²⁰ A good example of the same method is found in Prov 6:27-29:

Can a man carry fire in his bosom	
and his clothes not be burned?	Answer: No.
Or can one walk upon hot coals	
and his feet not be scorched?	: No.

By appealing to a common ground of agreement, the first step in the argument is established. The premise is affirmed; a cause-and-effect correspondence exists between foolish behavior and injury. In v 29 an application is then made by analogy: "So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished." The same correspondence applies. Adulterous relations will be punished—the wife is as hot coals to the feet of her seducer; he will be burned. Numerous examples exist in Sirach.²¹ One of the briefest and best is 13:17:

What fellowship has a wolf with a lamb?	Answer: None.
No more has a sinner with a godly man.	

Once more the answer to the rhetorical question provides the first step in the analogy. It then is applied to the realm of human relationships in the second stichos. Sir 13:18 shows an interesting variation on this use of rhetorical questions. The passage reads:

What peace is there between a hyena and a dog?	Answer: None.
And what peace between a rich man and a poor man?	

Here the first step is established by the common answer to the first question. Then the parallel stichos, which is an application to the human realm, is framed as a question. It is obvious from the parallelism that the answer is again intended to be, "None!" Then, in 13:19, this conclusion regarding the basic antipathy between rich and poor is formulated in parallel declarative statements: "Wild asses in the wilderness are

²⁰6:13 illustrates the process in miniature. 6:28, however, is not used in the same way. The answer is not obvious, so the question does not serve to establish the argument; rather, it introduces it.

²¹Among them 12:13; 13:2c, 17, 18; 18:16; 36:26.

the prey of lions; likewise the poor are pastures for the rich." Thus it becomes apparent that Jesus and the wise men employ the same technique in the same way for the same purpose.²²

The second major discourse we wish to consider is found in chap. 6. Its organization, too, seems to be predominantly antithetical. The basic contrast, introduced in 6:1, is whether one's reward is to be from men or the heavenly Father, and hence where the arena in which one's piety shall be practiced is—before men, or before God who is in secret. Then in 6:2-21 applications are made to several aspects of one's religious life, viz., almsgiving, prayer and fasting. All of these applications are constructed with the antithetical rubric, "Not . . . but . . ." First the hearers are cautioned against an improper performance and then exhorted to behave by a different standard—at once more subdued, more spiritual and more rigorous.

In each of the applications the contrast is between those who perform their piety in order to be seen by men (6:2a, 5a, 16a) and piety performed before "your Father who is in secret" (6:4b, 6b, 18b). That God sees in secret is not an idea unique to Jesus. It is found also in the wisdom literature. For example, in reference to a man who breaks his marriage vows and thinks he is unseen, the comment is made:

His fear is confined to the eyes of men,
and he does not realize that the eyes of the Lord
are ten thousand times brighter than the sun;
they look upon all the ways of men
and perceive even the hidden places (Sir 23:14).

Here is the statement from the perspective of perceiving guilt; sin done in the darkest corner is not unknown to God. Jesus' statement, on the other hand, focuses on the aspect of reward; religious duties done unobtrusively are also equally well perceived and rewarded by God. An argument similar to Sirach's is found in Prov 24:12:

If you say, "Behold, we did not know this,"
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it?
And will he not requite a man according to his work?

If this verse is to be construed with v 11, the "this" of 12a refers to "those being taken away to death," whom the reader is urged to rescue. Hence in a sense the perspective is attribution of guilt as in Sir 23:19. Even if v 12 is independent and the "this" a general referent to any sin of commission or omission, the last question still bears an accusatory perspective (cf. also Prov 5:21). However, in Prov 15:3 a more general statement is given that incorporates both the negative and the positive perspectives: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good."

In the second section of the discourse, dealing with propriety in prayer, there is concern both with manner and content. Verses 5-6 again draw the dichotomy between outlandish public prayer whose object is

²²The method is also illustrated, e. g., in Job 6:5-6; 8:11-13; and possibly Eccl 4:11.

affirmation and praise from men, and prayer in secret which seeks only to communicate with God. Then in vv 7-8 a contrast is made, about the manner of prayer, between loquaciousness and leanness in speech. In reference to the heaping up of phrases in prayer, as well as testifying (5:37), we might take note of Prov 10:19: "When words are many, transgression is not lacking; but he who restrains his lips is prudent." In vv 9-13, Jesus instructs by modeling. In contrast to the empty phrases of the Gentiles, the paradigm prayer is given. The poetic structure of the prayer is highly interesting in terms of its possible original Semitic formulation,²³ but we can do no more than present our analysis, followed by a few observations in respect of the hypotheses we are testing:²⁴

Pater hēmōn ho en tois ouranois

<i>hagiasthētō to onoma sou</i>	v	s	
<i>elthatō hē basileia sou</i>	v	s	synthetic
<i>genēthētō to thelēma sou</i>	v	s	parallelism
<i>hōs en ouranō</i>			
<i>kai epi gēs</i>			merism
<i>ton arton hēmōn ton epiouision dos hēmin sēmeron</i>	o	v-io	a
<i>kai aphes hēmin ta opheilēmata hēmōn</i>	v-io	o	(a)
<i>hōs kai hēmeis aphēkamen tois opheiletais hēmōn</i>	s	v-io	(a)
<i>kai mē eisenenkēs hēmas eis peirasmon</i>	v	o	a
<i>alla rhysai hēmas apo tou ponērou</i>	v	o	a
			parallelism

We wish to focus briefly on the petition which reads, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," as well as the ground for that petition given in 6:14-15:

For if you forgive men their debts,	(s)	v	io	o
your heavenly Father will also forgive you;	v	s	io	
but if you do not forgive men,	(s)	—v	io	
neither will your Father forgive your debts.	s	—v		o

Jesus picks up a petition from the model and elaborates, both by way of further instruction and as a ground for inclusion of the petition. The structure of this elaboration is antithetical with the positive aspects being given first (contrary to the overarching rubric, "not . . . , but . . .") and the negative second. In this teaching also Jesus is not alone, for in Sir 28:2 we read, "Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray." The antithesis is articulated in the next two verses by means of the rhetorical question:

Does a man harbor anger against another
and yet seek healing from the Lord?
Does he have no mercy toward a man like himself
and yet pray for his own sins?

²³Here the work of J. Carmignac is important. See his *Recherches sur le Notre Père* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1969) and "Hebrew Translations of the Lord's Prayer—A Historical Survey," *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Sanford LaSor* (ed. G. A. Tuttle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

²⁴v = verb, s = subject, o = object, io = indirect object, p = preposition, a = adverb.

Any who would answer "Yes" to these questions would be deemed foolish. His behavior would be incongruous; he would be a living contradiction. Hence the only wise thing is to forgive the neighbor, and so does Jesus teach.

With reference to the pedagogical method exhibited in Jesus' teaching on prayer—namely, instructions about praying followed by a model—a similar method is used in Sir 39:13-16. After a call to attentiveness, instructions are given for singing a hymn of praise, both in terms of its manner (in song, with lyres) and content (bless the Lord, ascribe majesty, give thanks). Then a short example is given, introduced by "and this you shall say in thanksgiving":

All things are the works of the Lord,
for they are very good;
and whatever he commands
will be done in his time.

With the instruction in Matt 6:19-21 we have a transition to another subject. Elements of both the preceding contrast between men and the heavenly Father and the succeeding contrast between God and riches are present. The subject is treasures and whether they are to be accumulated on earth or in heaven. The structure may still be categorized under the "not . . . , but . . ." rubric and, in fact, the argument is given in antithetical parallelism:

Do not heap up for yourselves treasures on earth,	-v	io	o	-a
where moth and rust consume		p	s ₁ + s ₂	v
and where thieves break in and steal;		p	s	v ₁ + v ₂
but heap up for yourselves treasures in heaven,	v	io	o	a
where neither moth nor rust consume		p	-(s ₁ - s ₂)	v
and where thieves neither break in nor steal.		p	s	-(v ₁ + v ₂)

Here the first line is antithetically parallel to the fourth, the second to the fifth, and the third to the sixth. A similar recommendation is promulgated in Sir 29:11: "Lay up your treasure according to the commandments of the Most High, and it will profit you more than gold." The treasures-pericope is concluded by an epigrammatic summary with clear proverbial character: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Statements with a proverbial stamp are used in this capacity (as the epitome of a pericope) on several occasions in the sermon. We have noted 5:30, 42 previously and see another in 6:24b and 6:34. In each case the proverbial summary follows the argument, drawing the details together and articulating the essence. The epitome does not always succeed the argument but occasionally precedes, as in 7:1. These summary proverbs before or after more extended arguments are found also in wisdom literature.²⁵

The antithetical structure perceived in the transitional pericope in 6:19-21 is continued with the light/darkness contrast in vv 22-23 and with

²⁵E. g., for the former, Prov 30:24; 31:10; Ps 32:1; Eccl 1:2; 3:1, 9; Job 4:17; 5:17; 14:1; 24:1; for the latter, Prov 8:34; 11:31; Ps 49:12, 20; Eccl 1:18; Job 28:28. Many instances are identifiable in Sirach.

the antithetical parallelism of v 24:

No man can serve two masters,	A
for either he will hate the one and love the other	B
or he will be devoted to one and despise the other;	B'
you cannot serve God and Mammon.	A'

Line one states the theme generally. Lines two and three are supports offered to ground the truth of that statement. Lines two and three are synonymously parallel, each offering within itself the antithesis we have grown accustomed to seeing and which is eminently compatible with Jesus' concluding wisdom speech. Then line four re-expresses the theme, this time in terms of the specific antithesis between God and Mammon that was anticipated in 6:19-21 and will be elaborated in 6:25-34.

The "therefore" of v 25 makes the logical connection with the preceding argument. The verses are interdependent. Verse 24 is the premise and v 25 introduces a conclusion: "Therefore do not worry about life's essentials." This conclusion is then further substantiated by arguments drawn from nature concerning the reliability of God's provisions for one's needs. On the basis of this reliability, trust in God is advocated (v 33). And this choice of God over Mammon is the real point of the pericope. To have concluded in v 25, "Therefore, devote yourselves to God and he will provide," would have been backwards. Jesus' argument leads from the known to an awareness of who the true provider is and an acknowledgement of his trustworthiness. On that basis, then, trust is advocated. Verse 34, which is in the spirit of v 25, then counsels allowing that trust to inform one's daily existence.

We have already drawn attention to the device of the rhetorical question in Jesus' method; here we wish to focus on another technique, the argument from lesser to greater, or the method the rabbis referred to as *qal wəḥōmer* ("light and heavy"). For example, in v 30 Jesus says:

But if God so clothes the grass of the field,
which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven,
will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?

A true statement about one subject precedes (6:28b-29), which is then rephrased as a conditional clause on the basis of whose truth an extension is made to another subject by comparison. If something is true in a less significant ("light") realm, how much more in a realm of greater significance ("heavy")! The comparison is not haphazard, however, but rigorously logical. Another example occurs in 6:23: "If the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (or, more completely, "How much greater is the darkness in you").

Two more instances are found in chap. 7 in combination with rhetorical questions that develop a premise to which all would assent:

Or what man of you
if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?
or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? (7:9-10)

Obviously, no man would react so insidiously to his child. Here is the truth that all would acknowledge. Then comes the argument *qal wəḥōmer*:

If you then, who are evil,
 know how to give good gifts to your children,
 how much more will your father who is in heaven
 give good gifts to those who ask him! (7:11)

Certainly one must assent that if man, who is evil, does good, then God, who is perfect, will do much more good. Arguments *qal wəḥōmer* are also attested in the wisdom literature.²⁶ Two examples from Proverbs will suffice by way of illustration: "Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord—how much more the hearts of men!" (15:11); "if the righteous is requited on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!" (11:31).

With chap. 7 we come to the last series of pericopes in the sermon. We propose to treat them in less detail since we have dealt with portions of several of them elsewhere.²⁷ The question we cannot shun, however, is that concerning structure. There are seven pericopes (including the final wisdom speech), and most seem to exhibit the same structural affinity as have previous chapters. The second section, e. g., contrasts the unclean and sacred (7:6); the fourth section, 7:13-14, is a sterling example of antithetical parallelism:

Enter by the narrow gate,	a
for wide is the gate	b
and easy the way	c
that leads to destruction;	d
many are those entering through it;	e
for narrow the gate	-b
and hard the way	-c
that leads to life,	-d
and few are the ones finding it.	-e

The conclusion comes first, and then the supporting arguments in strict antithetical parallelism. Each stichos in the second group is made the antithesis of its respective stichos in the first group by changing the crucial word in each stichos to its opposite. Thus, wide → narrow, easy → hard, destruction → life and many → few. This pericope, too, is perfectly compatible with the doctrine of the two ways, and so with the final wisdom speech by Jesus, not least in its contrast of life and destruction. However, as in other cases Jesus was anticipated in his teaching by Sirach, at least so far as the path to destruction is concerned. In Sir 21:10 we find the following: "The way of sinners is smoothly paved with stones, but at its end is the pit of Hades."

The fifth section in chap. 7 (vv 15-20) is a warning against false prophets. The argument is again structured antithetically, contrasting appearance with reality, and is expressed in terms of the animal kingdom. The test, however, is in the results, and the argument there too is formed antithetically, as we have previously discussed. The penultimate section (7:21-23) focuses on who will enter the kingdom of heaven

²⁶Prov 11:31; 15:11; 17:7; 19:7; 21:27; Sir 10:31.

²⁷E. g., epitomizing proverb, 7:1; rhetorical question, 7:3, 4, 9, 10, 16, 17; and *qal ueḥōmer*, 7:11.

(asserting that not everyone will, as did 7:13-14), and the discussion is set forth in terms of those who do the will of the Father in heaven and those who claim mighty works, which is an argument reminiscent of the contrast in chap. 6 between piety done in secret before the heavenly Father and that done before men. Thus the structure would seem to be maintained in this section also, but somewhat less obviously—though the contrast between doing the will of God and entering the kingdom of heaven, and being an evildoer, i. e., not doing the will of God, and having to depart from Christ, is the same antithesis that informs the final speech of Jesus.

We turn at last to the somewhat more ambiguous beginning of the sermon, notably the beatitudes and the salt and light metaphors in 5:13 and 5:14-16. Were the beatitudes in Matthew's account matched, as they are in Luke, by an equal number of curses, the structure would fit well with our proposed organizational rubric. But they are not, and it does not. What then is to be made of them? First, the fact that they come at the beginning of the sermon suggests that they are intended as an introduction. As we have seen, epigrammatic summary statements are used at various points in the sermon, both before and after longer exposition. Perhaps the beatitudes may be construed in this way, as epitomes of the pericopes in the sermon. For example, 5:3 might be related to 6:19-21 (and possibly 7:21-23); 5:6 might be elaborated in 6:24-34 (especially 6:33); 5:7 may find its counterpart in 6:12, 14-15, and 5:9 may correspond with 5:43-48. However, not all of the beatitudes fit well into such a scheme, unless they are not intended each to be strictly differentiated from the others. If two beatitudes may be saying the same thing, the chances are better for finding correspondences for them all. Even so, however, a great deal of the sermonic material would yet be without a counterpart among the beatitudes. Hence a carefully orchestrated correspondence between 5:3-10 and the rest of the sermon cannot be substantiated. It may be significant that the *only* beatitudes in the sermon are located at the beginning. They are conspicuously absent from the rest of the sermon. Therefore they perhaps serve an independent function. With all the other pedagogical methods, none was confined to one area only in the sermon. They were used throughout, wherever most appropriate. Therefore perhaps the beatitudes, if they have a teaching function, accomplish it in a unique way. Rather than being exhortations, or summaries, or arguments of any stripe intended to convince, support, persuade or elicit agreement, they may be intended not only to proclaim who is blessed but to effect that blessing, to bring the conditions to pass wherein the participants would be blessed. The beatitudes are also framed with an eye to the future; they introduce an eschatological dimension. We have not made much in this paper of the frequent eschatological bent of much of the teaching, but that dimension ought not to be underplayed, for it helps to inform the tension in which a follower of Christ must exist—a promised future reward that is a strengthening hope in time of adversity and yet simultaneously requires, and in some measure elicits, perfection in this world.

Verse 11 begins with the same formula as the rest of the beatitudes, but the subject changes from the third to second person. Since the content of 5:11 is very nearly the same as 5:10, it seems plausible that v 11 may begin a discourse aimed at the disciples themselves, rather than the crowd.²⁸ If there is an antithesis here it is in the contrast between what might be the expected response to adversity and that here solicited, namely, rejoicing, and between the connotations that oppression and persecution have of defeat, and the promised outcome, namely a future reward, a victory. Here, as with the false prophets (7:15-20), is a difference between appearance and reality.

The two passages in 5:13 and 5:14-15 seem also to be addressed to the disciples, exhorting them to exemplary conduct. Here again the metaphors of salt and light seem to have the flavor and aura of antithesis. On the one hand flavorful and tasteless salt are compared, and on the other hand a light that is displayed and one that is hidden are contrasted. Poor exemplars are fit for nothing but destruction, while good exemplars motivate the appropriate response in observers—i. e., praise and worship and emulation.

Having come full circle in our discussion of the sermon, it is well to summarize what we have shown. The narrative *inclusio*, setting the sermon in a didactic framework, prompted our inquiry into features of the sermon that have affinities with Israel's wisdom literature. Jesus' concluding speech was investigated and found to have all the touchstones of wisdom; its form, language, imagery, content and function are typically sapiential. Moreover the speech epitomizes the pervasive wisdom antithesis, the doctrine of the two ways. We then set forth the hypothesis that this fundamental antithetical doctrine entailed the organizational principle of the sermon in its present shape. An investigation of the sermon found this hypothesis to be true; the principle is evident throughout, though its visibility is sometimes stark, sometimes subtle. Thus we conclude that the sermon has a conscious and pervasive ordering principle, and that principle is epitomized in Jesus' final call to attention and obedience.

²⁸This would then effectively isolate the beatitudes in 5:3-10, which would seem to favor my argument above about their possible unique function in the sermon. An argument might be mounted linking the "blessed" with the *'asrê* formula of many proverbs, but they are not used in the wisdom books as here. They are never collected as here. Even if the link were made, it would not significantly help clarify the role of 5:3-10 in the sermon as a whole.