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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1   Thesis and aim of this study

Alternative reading strategies presents contemporary readers of the Bible with largely unexplored opportunities to understand afresh the text of the Old Testament as well as faith concepts such as the fear of the Lord expressed in it. In a reflection on the impact of "what many are calling a postmodern time" (Johnson 2003:110) on contemporary readers' reading of the Scriptures, Johnson affirms the normative role of the Bible within the life of the Church, but concludes: "What to make of the Scriptures materially, however, engenders more controversy. It is a question that requires continual investigation" (Johnson 2003:109). In another study, Venter (2006:1369) found that "[a]n analysis of the present postmodern situation indicates resistance to the idea of "canon" understood in terms of a normative, final collection of literature." Within this postmodern setting, with its "widespread loss of biblical meaning" (Johnson 2003:109), it is necessary to consider a reading of the Scriptures that can do justice to the claims of the Church about the Bible's authority, yet can remain relevant for the postmodern culture with its anti-authoritative sentiments.

The thesis of this study is that a Ricoeurian hermeneutic, that is an investigation into the functioning of "poetic discourse" (Ricoeur 1977:22), that reads the Biblical text with an eye towards the symbolic world that the text constructs for its readers (cf. Sandoval 2006), might aid such a reading of the Bible. Proverbs 10:1–15:33, with specific reference to the fear of the Lord, will serve as a case study. The aim then of this study is twofold. Firstly, to bring together hermeneutics and wisdom literature by testing a reading strategy that can do justice to the claims of the Church about the Bible's authority, yet can remain relevant to postmodern thought especially in terms of the threefold movement within postmodern thought, that is the movements beyond foundations, beyond totalities and towards the Other. Secondly, in the process of testing the reading strategy on Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of Yahweh, an effort will be made to describe an understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord for contemporary readers.

The contemporary reader I have in mind is twofold and is the result of my own personal context. Firstly, I am the pastor of an Afrikaans-speaking congregation of the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa in Pinetown, South Africa, a small city just inland from the harbour city of Durban. Within this context I aim to minister the relevance of the Scriptures to congregants that have a variety of frames of reference and are greatly affected by a large variety of influences. Secondly I am also, through this study, part of the academic community and would like to share the resultant findings of this study with academic thinkers that may or may not be doing research or practicing theology of the same type as my own. For the sake of this dialogue it is necessary to describe my own theological standpoint.

I will use Ford's (2005:2-3) concise description of the five types of theology to locate my own theological standpoint. Drawing on Frei (1992), he imagines a line punctuated by five types of theology. At the one end the first type is a theology that attempts to repeat a traditional Christianity which sees all reality in terms of itself. At the other end the fifth type of theology gives priority to modern secular worldviews or philosophies while Christianity in its own terms are only valid insofar as it fits in with these worldviews and philosophies. The second to fourth types are located in between these two extremes. Type two gives priority to the self-description of the Christian community and insists that Christian identity takes precedence to all other reality that needs to be construed in relation to it. This type of Christian theology seriously engages the contemporary world in its quest for understanding. This is where I find myself theologically and it is from this standpoint that I conduct this research. Type three is in the middle of the imaginative line and is a theology of correlation, bringing into dialogue traditional Christian faith understanding and contemporary ideas. The fourth type uses contemporary philosophies, conceptualities and problems to integrate Christianity and reinterpret it in terms of these contemporary idioms or concerns.

The consequence of my own theological position and the effect thereof on this study is that the research is done from a type two theological position. The study is not an attempt to do postmodern research or practice postmodern theology but to take seriously the contemporary environment that is greatly affected by postmodern influences some of which can be explicated in terms of the threefold movement

within postmodern thought described by Johnson (2003). Though not exhaustive of postmodern thought or of the influences affecting modern day readers of the Bible, the threefold movement within postmodern thought gave me a workable description of some of these influences, that I will utilise throughout this study in order to present a reading of Proverbs 10:1-15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord and an understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord that takes seriously at least some of these influences.

1.2   Chapter delimitation

Chapter 1 introduces this study, its framework and the considerations that determine the focus of this study.

Chapter 2 will be an investigation into firstly hermeneutics, secondly the threefold movement within postmodern thought, thirdly interpretation as imagination and the world in front of the text that is the functioning of "poetic discourse" (Ricoeur 1977:22) with the help of a Ricoeurian hermeneutic, and lastly the question of reading Proverbs as poetry or prose. Chapter 2 ends with a statement on the methodological considerations and resultant procedure that will be followed.

With these investigations as the backdrop of this study, an identification and exploration of the relevant proverbs will next be undertaken. If the structuring of the text (this will be explored in chapter 3) was aimed at projecting a world (this will be explored in chapter 4), Reese ([1979] 1990:392), in accord with Ricoeur, concludes that the main task of an interpreter of a text, is to clarify the horizons of that symbolic-textual world for modern readers (this will be explored in chapter 5).

Chapter 3 will investigate the relevant proverbs in terms of their poetic expression concentrating on explanation or the 'what is said' according to Ricoeur (1976:19–22). In terms of Ricoeur's distinction between explanation and understanding, it is necessarily the first stage of a hermeneutical enquiry. By performing an examination of the formal elements, that is the lexical, syntactic and grammatical elements, as well as the internal organisation of the relevant proverbs in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 that deal with the fear of the Lord, the 'meaning as sense' may be distinguished.

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Sandoval (2006:22) pointed out that this may be helpful in "discerning how a text constructs patterns of value". Scott ([1989] 1990:49) brings to the fore that careful consideration must be given to the literal level, for it is the vehicle for the nonliteral level, the tenor.

Chapter 4 will focus on understanding or 'meaning as reference' and explore the 'referential intention' (Ricoeur 1976:20–21) of those proverbs identified in chapter 3 or the 'about what it is said', according to Ricoeur (1976:19–22), in order to come to an understanding of the symbolic world, with specific reference to the fear of the Lord, that Proverbs constructs for its readers.

Chapter 5 will explore the appropriation of the text by the reader or the fusion of the world of the text and the world of the reader and formulate a possible understanding of the fear of the Lord for contemporary readers of Proverbs 10:1–15:33. The hope is to come to an understanding of both the text and the concept of the fear of the Lord, that moves beyond foundations, beyond totalities and toward the Other.

Chapter 6 will give an overview of this study and formulate the thesis and resulting findings.

1.3   Focus of this study

It is now necessary to explain the focus of this research. The following considerations helped to determine the focus of this study:

1.3.1 Wisdom literature

Ricoeur considered the wisdom mode "as worthy of wider hermeneutical attention" (Thiselton 1998:106). A consideration of the reflections of wisdom literature may help counter the development of a single totality of meaning within the understanding of the Scriptures. This is in line with the movement beyond totalities within postmodern thought that is contemplated in chapter 2.

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Venter (2006:1381–1385) indicates that there is a tendency to search for a unifying principle within an 'objective' understanding of canon, and he points out the difficulties with such a quest. Loader (2005:1038) also argues that it is to be anticipated that once different books have been collected into one collection, as has happened with the Bible, there is a tendency to begin to think of it as a unity. But Ricoeur brought to the fore that the multivalent and polyphonic way in which the different genres within the Scriptures together name God (Ricoeur 1995:224). Wallace (1995:27) notes Ricoeur's warning against smothering the disjunctions that disagree with the seeming unity of the all encompassing plot of a Biblical narrative.

For this reason, Wallace (1995:27) and Johnson (2003:110) suggest that, as a guard against the lure of an all-inclusive totality of meaning and triumphalism that tend to be attributed to the Biblical narrative, the wisdom genre may supplement and interrogate it. The result will be a multifaceted understanding of the divine life, an enhanced and deepened understanding of God through the coming together of narrative and nonnarrative discourses (Wallace 1995:26). It is what in narrative research would be called 'thickening the plot' to guard against a 'thin story' (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001:83). In the faith life of an individual believer or community of faith, this may contribute to a richer understanding of the relationship with God.

Hildebrandt (2005:58) warns against a trivial assimilation of the ethos of the proverbial wisdom as a genre into the record of events of Israel's salvation history and advises: "Wisdom's perspective should be drawn from the proverbial text itself and its diversity savoured."

Ricoeur's observation about the naming of God in the wisdom genre sets the table for the contribution that wisdom texts may make. "Wisdom, we have seen, recognizes a hidden God who takes as his mask the anonymous and non-human course of events" (Ricoeur 1977:14). This dimension of the naming of God that wisdom texts presents, the experiencing of "a hidden God" (Ricoeur 1977:14), may contribute to a broader understanding of God and the relationship with God.

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In an attempt to re-describe the ethical dimension of revelation, Ricoeur (1977:11) touches on yet another contribution that the wisdom genre may make; "if we continue to speak of revelation as historical, it is not only in the sense that the trace of God may be read in the founding events of the past or in a coming conclusion to history, but in the sense that it orients the history of our practical actions and engenders the dynamics of our institutions." Ricoeur employs Anglo-American speech act theory to explain the dynamic of Biblical meaning.

> According to J. L. Austin and others, much of our discourse has performative force in that it not only says something (the locutionary act), it also often does something in the saying (the illocutionary act), or it generates a certain effect by the saying (the perlocutionary act). Applying speech act theory to scriptural interpretation uncovers not how the biblical texts communicate propositional content but rather, through their power to disclose new modes of being, how these texts propel the reader into a living confrontation with the God referred to by these texts.
>
> (Wallace 2000:304)

Instead of communicating propositional content, which is in line with the movement "beyond foundations" (Johnson 2003:110) within postmodern thought, by their power to disclose new modes of being (among other things wisdom living over and against foolish living), wisdom texts through their illocutionary force wants to orient "the history of our practical actions" (Ricoeur 1977:11) and engender "the dynamics of our institutions" (Ricoeur 1977:11). This corresponds with the movement toward the Other in postmodern thought.

Davis (2009:276) remarks: "The wisdom tradition, if we take it seriously, forces us to look at how our relationship with God is expressed through myriad daily social practices, including economic practices; it confronts us with the fact that our relationship with God is at every moment inseparable from our relation to the material world."

1.3.2 Proverbs

In his preface to *The book of Proverbs: a survey of modern study*, Whybray (1995:vii) states that Proverbs has previously been greatly neglected in scholarly inquiry and regarded as of little importance, but that in the time just prior to that publication it started to receive wider scholarly attention (cf. Crenshaw in Blocher 1977:3, regarding the study of wisdom literature).

According to Bland (1998), the marginalisation of Proverbs in scholarly interest was due to several reasons. Firstly, it appears in the third and least authoritative section of the canonical Hebrew Scriptures. The second reason is theological; wisdom does not seem to fit into the frame of the rest of the Old Testament. Gerhard von Rad's emphasis on *Heilsgeschichte* and Walter Eichrodt's use of covenant, marginalised the wisdom literature that is considered to be too anthropocentric; it is centred on human achievement and ability. In relation to the rest of the Biblical canon Proverbs seems too secular. Thirdly, it is a formal reason namely that wisdom is not narrative as is the majority of the Hebrew Scriptures and how one deals with what appears to be random collections of proverbs causes difficulty. The limited literary context of the self-contained Proverbs of the sentence literature gives the appearance of moralistic platitudes.

The development of scholarly interest in the book is probably caused by a re-evaluation of the moral, religious and theological importance of the book (Whybray 1995:vii) and an appreciation of the insights and broadening of perspective that it can bring to the understanding of people, God, the world, society and their respective mutual relationships. Indeed, it is the premise of this study that wisdom literature and Proverbs in particular might bring a unique perspective to theology in general, a perspective that can be of great value within the postmodern condition.

Bergant (1997:78) calls the book of Proverbs the "basic source of the study of biblical wisdom", and Sandoval (2006:6) describes Proverbs as "the template against which other biblical and early Jewish wisdom texts are read and judged." This makes it a good starting point from which to consider what Sandoval (2006:7) calls the symbolic moral world that the book constructs for its readers and what Ansberry (2010:125) calls "a fundamental moral vision that (re)constructs the addressee's perception of reality and shapes his character." This consideration of the symbolic-

textual world will be done with specific reference to the concept of the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 10:1–15:33.

Also, Venter (2006:1369–1373) sketches the postmodern situation with its resistance to objective normative doctrines. Within such an environment the non-totalising character of proverbial wisdom is a welcome form of discourse reflecting on the relationship with God, the world and society. In Lawrie's words:

> If Israelite wisdom based itself on a vision of a cosmic order, this vision is not apparent in the sentence literature. The scene is set for a postmodern epiphany: proverbial wisdom renounces grand narratives. Instead of general theories built on secure foundations, it offers us dispersed, local truths (cf. Williams 1981:42, 70) – and even these are fluid and open to contradiction (cf. von Rad 1972:113, 126). In fact, they are, in their pristine form, not truths at all but metaphors still aware of their distance from any putative reality.
>
> (Lawrie 2006:74–75)

The "historical and cultural universality of the proverb genre" (Longman 2008:529) makes it possible for ancient proverbs to communicate with a postmodern audience. "From the ancient clay tablets of Sumer (ca. 2500 BC) to post-modern Internet pop-ups, the proverb has crossed all cultural, linguistic and literary boundaries" (Mieder in Hildebrandt 2005:3; Longman 2008:529).

The book of Proverbs "includes popular themes that belong to everyday life and promotes an ethical vision that reflects the ethos of the people" (Ansberry 2010:1). Ansberry chooses to explore the courtly nature of the book of Proverbs, but acknowledges that "in the view of the diverse nature of the sapiential material, scholars have offered several proposals concerning the social setting of the work ranging the world of the simple, rural folk to formal schools or guilds associated with the royal court" (Ansberry 2010:1).

Wisdom literature and Proverbs in particular, with its very much human reflections on the 'horisontalism' of human experiences, because of its inclusion within the Christian canon, opens up the possibility of meeting the Other – that is God – within

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the reflections of an(O)ther – that is the wisdom writers/redactors. On the question of the contribution that a study of and the preaching of the book of Proverbs may make, Davis (2009:264) writes: "Probing Proverbs with imagination and depth might be the best way for the preacher to counter our society's deadly propensity to reduce religion to "spirituality," abstracted from concrete social and economic practices and our relationship with the material world."

There is scholarly agreement that Proverbs is a collection composed by different writers and redactors (Whybray 1994:157–165). "Proverbs is … a collection of collections" (Bergant 1997:78). Ansberry states: "In general the book of Proverbs represents a collection of Israel's sapiential lore, produced by distinct social groupings in various locations and then assembled, augmented and edited by a group of scribes to provide a complex compendium of wisdom" (Ansberry 2010:1). The value that this collection of proverbs may add is aptly described by McKenzie (in Davis 2009:271): "When a preacher knows her own biblical proverbial heritage and is attuned to how proverbs are in constant use in her culture, she is equipped to offer the dehumanized consumers in the pews an alternative identity, world-view, and way of life."

Another distinctive contribution that Proverbs makes to the Christian canon is perceived by Davis (2009:275) that observes the book's comprehensive depiction of the practice of wisdom in ordinary human experiences. "More than any other book of the Bible, Proverbs offers concrete guidance for how we may embody wisdom." He adds one last contribution: "Proverbs stands within the canon of Scripture as a strong counter to the propensity, both ancient and modern, to reduce religious practice, or holiness of life, to mere "spirituality"" (Davis 2009:277).

1.3.3 The fear of the Lord

According to Whybray (1995:136), "the Fear of Yahweh is a key concept in Proverbs." The placement of the concept at the beginning (1:7) as well as at the end (31:30) of the book "creates a literary envelope around the book, and illustrates the concrete embodiment of theoretical wisdom" (Ansberry 2010:181). Thus, the fear of the Lord being a key concept placed very strategically within the book indicates its

importance to understanding the message of Proverbs and makes an effort to study it a worthwhile endeavour (Blocher 1977:4–5).

Many scholars have mused about whether the Yahweh-proverbs were part of the original structure of the collections in which they occur or if it was added to the collections by a later redactor/s in a pietist attempt to counter the seeming secularism of the proverbs (See Ansberry 2010:95; Fox 2009:482; Boström 1990:36–39; Wilson 1987:328–331; Blocher 1977:4). This question also touches on the question of the relationship between Proverbs 22:17–24:22 (which falls outside of the scope of this study) and *The instruction of Amenemope* (see Fox 2009) or other Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature (see Shupak 2005:203–220). However one considers the development of the collections into a single book and the relationship with non-Biblical wisdom texts, the fear of Yahweh is a key concept within the canonical book.

1.3.4 Proverbs 10:1–15:33

There is wide scholarly agreement on the division of the different subunits within Proverbs. For the subdivision of Proverbs into distinct sections see Bergant 1997:78–107, Whybray 1994, Heim 2001:1, Fox 2009 and Ansberry 2010:9. These are mostly inferred from the editorial headings entrenched in Proverbs (1:1; 10:1; 22:17; 24:23; 25:1; 30:1; 31:1), indicating what probably once were separate collections, each generally composed of yet smaller collections concealing complex redactional histories of their own (Whybray according to Gladson 1995:717; Hildebrandt 2005:56–57; Parsons 1993:153). In order to have a workable designation, this study will utilise the "traditional divisions of the material" (Ansberry 2010:9) in Proverbs and focus on Proverbs 10:1–15:33.

Proverbs 1–9 is comprised of poems that are more theological in nature as opposed to the next section that is comprised of short sentences that are much more focused on human concerns with only occasional reference to theological matters. Clifford (2009:242) states that "[i]f ethics can be defined, philosophically at least, as the study and evaluation of human conduct in the light of moral principles, then the proverbs of chs. 10-22 are a major resource of ethical reflection."

One third of the Yahweh-sayings are concentrated in chapters 15 and 16, at the centre of the collection in 10:1–22:16 (Whybray 1979:157–158; Dell 2006:106). It is widely acknowledged that two groups of sayings can be discerned within the second collection of Proverbs – chapters 10:1–15:33 and 16:1–22:16 (Clifford 1999:108; Perdue 2000:159; Treier 2011:61). Proverbs 10:1–15:33 is the first collection within the second major section (10:1–22:16) within the book of Proverbs. Antithetic proverbs are especially concentrated in chapter 10–15 (Fox 2004:166). This study will focus on this first collection of short sentences in Proverbs 10:1–15:33. Proverbs 15:33 are often subdivided with 16:1–22:16 (cf. Venter 1999:719) and can be read with either of the two collections as a link between the first (10:1–15:33) and second (16:1–22:16) collection.

1.4   Conclusion

In this chapter, the aim and thesis of this study was introduced. A prospective was given of the delimitation of the chapters and the considerations that determine the focus of this study was explained. The next chapter outlines hermeneutical influences and literary critical orientation of this study and the methodological considerations grounded in these.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1   Introduction

This chapter represents a sketch of the literary critical orientation of this study and the methodological considerations grounded in this orientation.

First, an overview of an understanding of hermeneutics is given. Next, as the interpretive situation can be described according to Brueggemann (2003:xi) as being wholly new, it comes into consideration through the threefold movement within postmodern thought – the movements beyond foundations, beyond totalities and towards the Other. Brueggemann (2003:xi) notes how recent developments in the interpretive perspective of Old Testament study have made a difference for the way in which the Old Testament may be accessed as a source and norm for faith. His notion of interpretation as imagination together with Ricoeur's understanding of the referential intention of poetic texts forms the core notions of this study.

This study explores the interpretive contribution that a reading of the text of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord, with special attention to the referential intention of the text, may make. Such a reading of the text, with an eye toward the unfolding world in front of the text, may lead to a richer understanding of the notion of the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 10:1–15:33, for the contemporary reader of the Biblical text. Thus, the functioning of metaphor, the world in front of the text, aspects of metaphoricity of the text as well as the four poles of a Ricoeurian hermeneutic will be considered.

Next, the question whether to read Proverbs as prose or poetry comes under consideration. Lastly, the methodology and procedures of this study is expounded which is followed by a summary of the chapter.

2.2   Hermeneutics

One of the aims of this study is to bring together hermeneutics and wisdom literature, notably Proverbs and specifically Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the

fear of the Lord. Heitink (1993:175) describes the hermeneutical issue as probably the most far-reaching question of our time. Thus, it will be fruitful to first consider hermeneutics, the aims and scope of it, in order to come to an understanding of hermeneutics relevant for this study. In terms of this study hermeneutics represents more an attitude or deportment than a method (Thiselton 2009:2). It has more to do with basic terms, conditions and principles than a set of rules (Van Aarde 2003:3; Thiselton 2009:4). Friesen (2011:98, author's italics) asserts that "(a)s the art of interpretation or understanding, hermeneutics applies primarily to the text, but what is ultimately most important for hermeneutics is the *spirit* rather than the *letter*." In Clark's (2006:67) words: "Understanding is fundamentally more a practice than a theory." As such, it is not definable in the narrow sense of the term.

Thiselton (2009:1) expresses the same idea when he writes: "Hermeneutics explore how we read, understand, and handle texts". It entails "the second-order discipline of asking critically *what exactly we are doing when we read, understand, or apply* texts" (Thiselton 2009:4, author's italics). Clark (2006:59) defines hermeneutics as "the theory of interpretation: of what it is to interpret a text and of how that interpretation may validate itself." For Deist (1990:113) it is "theoretical reflection on the process(es) of comprehension in general." Hermeneutics, thus, has to do primarily with interpretation and understanding.

Ricoeur (1976:90) understands hermeneutics as "the theory of the fixation of life expressions by writing." He insists on defining the hermeneutic task in terms of the quality of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text as the reference of the text. The subjective concept that corresponds to that of the world of the text is the concept of appropriation by which he means the very act of understanding oneself before the text.

The distinction between rules and methods on the one hand, and principles, attitudes and conditions on the other, relates to the two dimensions of hermeneutics. The Greek verb ἑρμηνεύω denotes according to Louw & Nida (1988) "to translate from one language to another — 'to translate, to interpret.'" It has two dimensions. The first is explanation, which can be seen to be more of a rational or critical dimension. The second is understanding, which can be seen to be more of a creative dimension

(Thiselton 2009:8; also see Van Aarde 2003:3). Schleiermacher in his hermeneutical thinking introduced this distinction and "sought to balance what he called the "feminine" dimension of intuitive, personal, "divinatory" understanding (like understanding a friend), and the "masculine" dimension of comparative, critical, rational, explanation (like scientific method)" (Thiselton 2005:297; cf. Guignon 2003:29). The German words *Erklärung* (explanation) and *Verstehen* (understanding) denote these two dimensions (Thiselton 2009:9). Both of these come into play during any hermeneutical inquiry and will indeed be utilised in this study.

It is, however, not only a question of whether hermeneutics has to do with explaining and/or understanding. It is also about what it is that is to be explained and understood. The term 'hermeneutics' has for a long time been associated with texts and the interpretation of written documents (Heitink 1993:175). Guignon (2003:25) maintains that "from its very inception, hermeneutics, understood as the art and theory of interpretation, was concerned with discovering the meaning of texts, especially Scripture." The scope of hermeneutics, however, did not remain limited to written documents, as exponents of hermeneutics would attest to. He notes two stages in the transition of the conception of hermeneutics as a branch of theology, specifically concerned with Scriptural texts, to contemporary philosophical hermeneutics that have a broader concern and application. The first was the shift, in the early nineteenth century inaugurated by Schleiermacher, to the idea of a general hermeneutics applicable to all forms of human expression. The second was the ontological hermeneutics, developed by Heidegger and Gadamer that attempted to clarify the *being* of the interpreter (Guignon 2003:26). The scope of hermeneutics was broadened to include other phenomenon such as spoken words, gestures, actions, historical and social phenomenon, and so forth (Müller 1996:10). Demasure & Müller (2006:414) notes that everything "readable" is considered under the category of text and since all aspects of human life is meaningful and can be "read" just about everything can be considered to be "text".

Within this same movement Ricoeur in his thinking came to see the interpretation of texts to be the paradigm for the interpretation of actions and even for the interpretation of a person's identity (Ricoeur 1973; Demasure & Müller 2006:410).

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Jacques Derrida also uses his thoughts on understanding language and how it operates as a blueprint for understanding the whole of reality's workings: "In its widest sense, deconstruction is what happens in the world. It can also be used as the name for Derrida's way of seeking to respond to that happening – not so much a way of analysing the world as a way of living in the world" (Thomson 2006:305–307). Later in this study, attention will be given to the movement beyond totalities within postmodern thought that leans on the insights of deconstruction.

The two stages in the transition from the narrow conception of hermeneutics as a branch of theology, to a broader philosophical understanding of hermeneutics, can be better understood against the backdrop of the difference between practicing hermeneutics within the framework of more traditional philosophy or a philosophical hermeneutical approach. Thiselton (2009:7–31) discusses the differences between philosophy as more traditionally practiced and philosophical hermeneutics, that is helpful to better understand the mindset and stance of contemporary hermeneutics.

Firstly, traditionally interpreters of texts focused more attention on the rational, critical dimension, but with the rise of hermeneutical philosophy focus shifted to the more creative dimension. As noted above, the term that represents the more traditional philosophical enquiry into texts is *Erklärung* while the term that represents the philosophical hermeneutical stance is *Verstehen*. It is widely acknowledged among hermeneutical scholars that both of these have their validity and place within a hermeneutical inquiry (cf. Ricoeur 1976:71–88). It has led to the description of hermeneutics as both an art and a science (Guignon 2003:25).

The shift in focus to attending more to the *Verstehen*-dimension of hermeneutical inquiry has to do with the turnaround of the subject-object scheme in traditional epistemology (Thiselton 2009:8). In rationalism, represented by thinkers such as Descartes, it is the active subject that scrutinises a passive object in order to gain knowledge from it (Thiselton 2009:8). Hermeneutical philosophy, however, values and appropriates that which is being understood not as an object but as a subject, equally able to inquire and interpret the interpreter (Thiselton 2009:8–9). Hermeneutics entails an outlook of non-objectifying openness, the interpreter being open and willing to, that the text as subject may genuinely come to speak and tell the

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hermeneut something, bringing some better understanding to the table, and even interrogate the hermeneut (Clark 2006:62; Thiselton 2009:8–9). This will be further explored later when considering the movement beyond totalities.

Secondly, another insight distinguishes philosophical hermeneutics from more traditional philosophy: the realisation that texts are not entities in abstraction but reflect concrete situations. This can be called in Schleiermacher's metaphor, the rootedness of texts located in time and place (Thiselton 2009:20–21). Texts want to perform certain tasks (Thiselton 2009:10–11). This can be called their illocutionary force (Thiselton 2009:10–11). They come into being within very specific situations and want to address that situation with a certain end in mind. Trying to come to an understanding without considering the illocutionary force of a text has the result of a diluted understanding.

This, however, does not mean that texts can only speak to the situation within which they came into being. The Biblical text, for instance, continues to speak in new circumstances. This insight means that a richer understanding can be achieved if the situation, within which a text came into being and the aim or illocutionary force of the text, is taken into consideration. This may also serve as the basis of a better application when the meaning of a text is applied to new and different circumstances. This richer understanding is not necessarily bound up with the intention of the author, as will later be apparent when the movement beyond totalities within postmodern thought will be explored. Meaning and interpretation include more than the historical dimensions of a text, but the aim or illocutionary force of the text remains a good launch pad from which to start a hermeneutical enquiry.

Thirdly, the insight that texts are not entities in abstraction is counterbalanced with the awareness that interpreters are not either. An interpreter does not approach a text fully devoid of any knowledge, detached and objective (Clark 2006:62), a *tabula rasa* as is the ideal for Enlightenment rationalism. Later on this notion will be further explored in more detail, when the movement beyond foundations, within the threefold movement in postmodern thought, will be discussed.

This has led to the formulation of the idea of the hermeneutical circle or spiral (Thiselton 2009:12). An interpreter comes to the text conditioned by their contemporary context and everything that that entails; they come to the text preconditioned with a very specific set of perceptions. This forms what can be called the pre-understanding, or preliminary understanding, or in German *Vorverständnis* (Thiselton 2009:13–16). This is the first hermeneutical stage and Ricoeur calls it prefiguration (Demasure & Müller 2006:411). An interpreter is "drawn into the text because he or she can understand it only through some sense of what is shared with it ... Understanding takes place through some sort of common 'horizon'" (Clark 2006:62), to Gadamer's term (Demasure & Müller 2006:411).

Thus, for understanding to take place the interpreter inevitably brings her/his horizon of understanding, their pre-understanding, to the text as a provisional, preliminary starting point from which to proceed in order to come to a more secure understanding (Thiselton 2009:13). Pre-understanding is specifically preliminary as it is open to alteration and readjustment, in the light of the encounter with a text. This is where doubt as a dialogue partner comes in, or what Ricoeur calls a hermeneutic of suspicion, which implies a willingness to do away with the idols in order to retrieve symbols through openness and listening (Thiselton 2005:300).

Pre-understanding, however, is not an individual and objective enterprise. It "begins with what we inherit from the wisdom or common sense of the community and the traditions into which we were born and educated" (Thiselton 2009:16). It is also in community, with the Other, that an interpreter may nurture an openness to what speaks 'from beyond' the individual self, aware of his/her own limitations an individual trusts to the better insight of others (Thiselton 2009:19). This will be further explored in the movement toward the Other within postmodern thought.

The next hermeneutical phase is configuration, when a meeting takes place between the horizon of the textual world and that of the reader's world (Demasure & Müller 2006:411). Even as an interpreter approaches a text with their horizon of pre-understanding, the text brings its own horizon. This is also known as the rootedness of texts located in time and place, as discussed earlier. Configuration is not an uncritical amalgamation of the reader's horizon with that of the text. It

happens when a merger takes place between the horizon of the textual world and that of the reader's, which allow for the enrichment of the reader's horizon and can lead to a disclosure, a new insight (Demasure & Müller 2006:411).

The new insight enables a refiguration: A new perception of the world and a new manner of standing in the world, as a result of an encounter between the horizon of the textual world and the reader's horizon (Demasure & Müller 2006:411). This refiguration becomes a prefiguration to the next configuration which will lead to yet another refiguration. This completes the continuing hermeneutical spiral and explains the bearing of hermeneutics: The hermeneut remains open to the text to refigure his/her prefiguration through configuration.

Lastly, hermeneutics leans heavily on the insights of several disciplines, whereas traditional philosophical enquiry is limited to the insights of philosophy. It aims to be interdisciplinary (Thiselton 2009:34). What follows are a discussion of some of the disciplines that influenced hermeneutics.

Traditional biblical studies introduced to hermeneutical inquiry the insight of the rootedness of the text in time and place, as discussed earlier (Thiselton 2009:20–24). Attentiveness to the historical dimensions of a text can help the interpreter discern the meaning of the text; the time and place it was written, the author and her/his circumstances, the purpose with which the text was produced, the situation it aims to address, the audience to which it speaks and so forth. These factors are not exhaustive of the meaning of a text and will not reveal the full scope of meaning. However, careful inquiry into the text's purpose, accountable use of reason, and respect for contextual limitations may contribute to discerning the meaning of the passage in relation to its rootedness in time and place (Thiselton 2009:24).

Literary theory contributed insights to philosophical hermeneutics that enriched hermeneutical enquiry. The insight that a text's meaning is not limited to the intention of the author came from the New Criticism (Thiselton 2009:24–29). According to the New Criticism, texts becomes autonomous once they are written and may have meaning beyond what the author intended, if indeed the intension of the author may be discerned. It guards against the perceived conceptual confusion

between the text itself and the 'origin' of the text (Thiselton 2009:25). In the New Criticism, however, factors external to the text are avoided as they lead away from the text (Thiselton 2009:25). *Pace* the New Criticism Wolterstorff (2003), in his article 'Resurrecting the author', advises interpreters to attend to external factors as he indicates that it does indeed shed light at least on the aim or illocutionary force of a text, as noted above.

The New Criticism, in spite of its contribution, left the text detached from its author, the subject matter to which it referred as well as from its readers (Thiselton 2009:29). In response, Reader-response theories developed within literary theory, that "promoted the view that the key determinant for the production of meaning was the *reader* or *readers* of a text. Meaning was less a product of the author or the text as such, or even of the relation between the text and its author, than a product of the relation between *the text and its readers. How readers responded to the text* came to be regarded as the main source and determinant of meaning" (Thiselton 2009:29, author's italics).

Reader-response theory underlined the part played inevitably by the beliefs, values and suppositions that the hermeneut brings with her/him to the text (Thiselton 2009:29). As have already been noted, readers of texts are just as shaped by their historical and societal positioning as authors of texts are and this has an impact on the way they read and interpret texts. This insight paved the way for what Gadamer called "historically conditioned reason" and in Jürgen Habermas's jargon "interest". It made readers more aware of the dynamics of power that are present in the creation and interpretation of texts. Ricoeur cautions toward a "hermeneutic of suspicion" to counter the self-centered values of self-interest and self-affirmation in terms of power (Thiselton 2009:32).

Briggs (2006:69) states in his article, 'What does hermeneutics have to do with biblical interpretation?', that "hermeneutics has less to do with biblical interpretation than it does with biblical interpreters … In short: for embodied practices of biblical interpretation, hermeneutics offers resources for understanding the interpreting self" (Briggs 2006:69–70; cf. Guignon 2003:26).

"Biblical hermeneutics investigates more specifically how we read, understand, apply and respond to biblical texts" (Thiselton 2009:4). Van Aarde (2003:4) points out that the same hermeneutical principles apply to all spheres of language and that there is no difference between the hermeneutical principles applied to Biblical texts and to non-Biblical texts. The difference lies in the character of the texts. The theological hermeneut's presupposition normally is that in the Biblical text he/she has to do with the Word of God that makes a certain claim on his/her life and therefore engages differently with Biblical texts than with non-Biblical texts (Van Aarde 2003:4).

Theological hermeneutics has to do with the comprehension of an utterance that lays claim on the totality of the hermeneut's existence, thoughts and actions, and wants to enter into that existence, to shape and (re)form it (Van Aarde 2003:4). Brueggemann (2002:11) states that "[t]he Bible is inherently the live Word of God that addresses us concerning the character and will of the gospel-giving God, empowering us to an alternative life in the word." Coffin (2002:3) describes the Bible thus: "It is a sacred book – that goes without saying" and agrees with Brueggemann (2002:13) "[t]he Bible … is not self-evident and self-interpreting … Rather, the Bible requires and insists upon human interpretation." This is because:

> The inherent Word of God in the biblical text is, of course, refracted through many authors who were not disembodied voices of revealed truth. They were, rather, circumstance-situated men and women of faith (as are we all) who said what their circumstance permitted and required them to speak, as they were able, of that which is truly inherent. It is this human refraction, of course, that makes inescapable the hard work of critical study, so that every text is invited to a suspicious scrutiny …

(Brueggemann 2002:12)

2.3   The threefold movement within postmodern thought

According to Walter Brueggemann (1993:vii) "[t]here can be little doubt that we are in a wholly new interpretive situation." This new interpretive situation has come to be known as postmodern. Brueggemann (1993:1–25) and many other writers have made it their task to describe the phenomenon of postmodernity (cf. Venter

2006:1370–1373; Dreyer 2006:1315–1324; Thayser 2001:58–67; Johnson 2003).

In recent years postmodern thought has been paving the way for a new understanding of rationality. Many scholars have been advocating the opportunities that this shift in the understanding of rationality may hold for Biblical interpretation and theology. Johnson (2003:110) sees in "the rethinking of the very meaning of meaning itself" prompted by postmodernity, a strategic opportunity for Christian theology "to understand its own subject matter – the gospel of Jesus Christ – in a fresh way." Brueggemann (1993:vii) suggests that "the new situation is in fact a positive opportunity to which church interpreters of the Bible may attend with considerable eagerness."

This study will consider the opportunity that the new interpretive situation presents modern-day readers of the Bible, to read and interpret the Scriptures in a fresh way. The concept of the fear of the Lord, as it is found in Proverbs 10:1–15:33, will function as a point in case to explore the interpretive opportunities that postmodern thought present the contemporary reader of the Old Testament.

Johnson identified a "threefold movement within postmodern thought" (Johnson 2003:110), that will be helpful in this endeavour. It can be described as "a movement beyond foundations, beyond totality and toward the Other" (Johnson 2003:110). This threefold movement will be explored in this study with the hope that it might guide and enlighten a reading of Proverbs 10:1–15:33.

2.3.1 Beyond foundations

One of the realisations in postmodern thought is that all our knowing takes place within, and is very much determined by our situatedness. Previously, especially within modern thought, lots of effort went into establishing a foundation of first principles which would be universally all-inclusive, self-evident, and self-validating and on which all "ideas, institutions, and initiatives" could be based (Johnson 2003:110). Knowing always takes place within very specific circumstances that we cannot ignore, for the circumstances inevitably determine our knowing.

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The reason for this realisation within postmodern thought is as Johnson (2003:110) states "that we have no ready access to these supposedly self-evident foundations – not, at least, apart from a tradition of reflection and criticism that helps legitimate all that we take to be foundational in the first place. Our knowing is built up not so much from discrete and fixed foundations as from a web of interdependent and self-correcting beliefs."

In his work Ricoeur emphasises this insight strongly. Mark I. Wallace describes the contribution that Ricoeur has made in this regard as follows:

> … as a hermeneut, Ricoeur argues that selfhood begins not with the philosophical hubris that the subject is an autonomous self but with an awareness that the subject enters consciousness already formed by the symbolic systems within one's culture. Consciousness is never independent or empty – a tabula rasa – but always already interpenetrated by the founding symbols and stories that constitute one's communal heritage.

> (Wallace 2000:302)

Brueggemann (2002:20) notes that there is no interpretation, neither of Scripture nor of anything else, that is unaffected by the passions, convictions and perceptions of the interpreter and cautions against ideology. "Ideology is the self-deceiving practice of taking a part for the whole, of taking "my truth" for *the* truth, of running truth through a prism of the particular and palming off the particular as a universal" (Brueggemann 2002:20). This study will be conducted with this caution in mind.

Another awareness that came with postmodern thought is the realisation that modernism posed a false dichotomy between objectivism and relativism (Johnson 2003:111). The movement beyond foundations offers an alternative to the either/or-approach by which modernity was characterised. By creating space for a both/and-approach, it offers an opportunity to move beyond, on the one hand the supposed security of an objectivist foundationalism and on the other, the insecurity of a complete relativism. Wallace (2000:303) remarks that "theology functions as living

testimony to the possibilities of biblical faith without the pseudo-security of a metaphysical foundation."

In this regard Ricoeur's thoughts on the poetic dimension of language are of significance:

> … the poetic function incarnates a concept of truth that escapes the definition by adequation as well as the criteria of falsification and verification. Here truth no longer means verification, but manifestation, i.e., letting what shows itself be. What shows itself is in each instance a proposed world, a world I may inhabit and wherein I can project my ownmost possibilities. It is in this sense of manifestation that language in its poetic function is a vehicle of revelation.

> (Ricoeur 1977:25)

The movement beyond foundations is key not only to our understanding of the Bible, but also to that to which the Bible testifies. In Johnson's words: "Neither the Scriptures nor the God to whom they bear witness – in their varying and sometimes conflicting ways – can be reduced to a manipulable "foundation"" (Johnson 2003:113). He suggests that the movement beyond foundations, as a result of this understanding, might have three consequences that this study will take seriously.

Firstly, the form of the Scriptures must be taken seriously. Ricoeur (1977:25) calls it "the externality of the work", that is to say "the shaping of discourse through the operation of literary genres" (Ricoeur 1977:22–23; cf. Ricoeur 1975:67–71). He explains that the literary genres of the Bible "as diverse as narration, prophecy, legislative texts, wisdom saying, hymns, supplications, and thanksgiving … do not constitute a rhetorical facade which it would be possible to pull down in order to reveal some thought content that is indifferent to its literary vehicle" (Ricoeur 1977:15).

Johnson (2003:114) suggests that a theology that moves beyond foundations must consider the "polyvalence and ambiguity within the biblical witness." How God is being portrayed in differing ways within different genres. He adds: "If the Scriptures do not reduce God to a single perspective, then neither can theology" (Johnson

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2003:115). It might be added that neither can any interpretation of Scripture nor any study.

Wallace (2000:304–305) makes the same case when he states that it is in "the circulation of meaning" within the assortment of the different genres within the Biblical texts that God is named. Frydrych (2002) examines the meaningful contribution that wisdom literature may make to Old Testament theology. This naming affords the reader alternative "models of apprenticeship" to the God that is identified in such diverse ways within the Biblical texts (Wallace 2000:304–305). When considering a single genre of the Bible, as is the case with this study, the danger of a narrowing perspective is imminent. This study does not claim to say all there is to say about interpretation and the Bible, the text or the subject of the text, but wants to contribute to a richer understanding of these matters.

Secondly, what Wallace (2000:305) calls the "disclosive power" of Biblical texts must be taken seriously. For Ricoeur, according to Wallace (2000:305), "revelation is an event of new meaning between text and interpreter … by virtue of its power to fuse the world of the text and the world of the reader" poetic texts open up a world within which the reader can project his/her "innermost possibilities" (Wallace 2000:305). What is being revealed in the Bible is something that is relevant and real as it is being read today. There is something real at stake not just for the writers of and characters in the Biblical witness, but also for the readers of it, and for God (Johnson 2003:115). Johnson explains:

> The biblical stories tell us not merely about the *nature* of God in the past, they constantly reveal to us in new ways the *identity* of God in the present. The stories, in other words, are not merely illustrative; they are constitutive of who God is. They mark out the essence of God's very own life, and therefore, when they are read in faith, we see to our amazement that the life of God is still unfolding in humanity's midst.
>
> (Johnson 2003:115)

Ricoeur (1977:23) calls it "the issue of the text", that is, "the world that the text unfolds before itself" (Ricoeur 1977:23). This study will explore the unfolding world

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not of the Biblical stories (as Johnson suggests) but the unfolding of the symbolic world the book of Proverbs constructs for its readers (cf. Sandoval 2006:7).

Thirdly, the reality to which the Biblical witness testifies is something that does not only belong to the past, but to the present. The reality to which the Scriptures bear witness is part of something that is still unfolding today (Johnson 2003:116). Hall describes it as follows: "To read the biblical texts is to participate in the redescription of reality initiated by the text and completed in the reader. What the texts offer to the imagination is, among other things, a moral redescription of reality" (Hall 2006:198). And in Johnson's words:

> What is most important are not the past meanings the stories are thought to contain but the present meanings they continually provoke in the community of faith. At the heart and soul of reading the scriptures faithfully is the constant rehearing of stories – and also of sayings, commandments, prophecies and other materials – whose repetition helps kindle and inflame, right here, at this very moment, the "new thing" that God who is for us in Jesus Christ is calling into being.
>
> (Johnson 2003:116)

This relates to the premise of this study which is that the wisdom writers and especially the writers of Proverbs intended with their writings a redescription of reality that wants to fund, to use Brueggemann's (1993:19) term, a new way of living for their readers. The hope is that this study will, through the interpretation of that redescription, contribute to a redescription of reality in the present day for the contemporary reader.

This brings us to the next movement within postmodern thought. As the Bible bears witness to something that is not yet completed, but is continually unfolding, viewing it "as projecting a self-enclosed, already accomplished totality of meaning" (Johnson 2003:116) must be guarded against.

2.3.2 Beyond totalities

The movement beyond totalities within postmodern thought grew out of an approach to texts called deconstruction, which in its turn developed as both a continuation of and reaction to certain insights of the approach to literary theory called structuralism (Johnson 2003:116–117; Carroll 1998:50). Structuralism's aim, through tightly structured analysis, is to overcome a text (Carroll 1998:50). The text is narrowed down to an object of investigation, by a subject, in order to strain from it a single objectively and impartially determined meaning (Johnson 2003:119). Once this meaning is discovered, there is really not much more that a text can have to offer. The only thing remaining is to close the text and put it away (Johnson 2003:118).

Previously, the meaning of a text was thought to be tied to the original intent of the author (Johnson 2003:118). Ricoeur, in the legacy of Wimsatt and Beardsley of the New Criticism (Thiselton 2009:25), brought to attention that writing "produces a form of discourse that is immediately autonomous with regard to its author's intention … thanks to writing, the world of the text can burst the world of the author. This emancipation with regard to the author has its parallel on the side of whoever receives the text. The autonomy of the text also removes this reader from the finite horizon of its original audience" (Ricoeur 1977:22). Wallace summarises Ricoeur's understanding as follows:

> … Ricoeur's hermeneutical model is not against the author; rather Ricoeur has sought painstakingly to situate his approach between two poles: the "intentional fallacy, which holds the author's intention as the criterion for any valid interpretation ... and the fallacy of the absolute text: the fallacy of hypostatizing the text as an authorless entity." For Ricoeur, the author's intentions are absorbed into the text's plurality of meanings which are themselves produced through the reader's responses to the range of possibilities the text projects. Once discourse becomes written it escapes the finite intentions of its author—be that author divine or human—and now enters the public domain of the reader where meaning is generated on the basis of the encounter between the text's potential meanings and the reader's interpretive construals of the same. In this schema, textual meaning is no longer necessarily coincident with authorial meaning; the text enjoys a certain "semantic autonomy" over and against its author.
>
> (Wallace 2000:305–306)

Later structuralism's focus on the structure of a text to find meaning, led to an awareness of the organic connection between language and its referent, with the resulting realisation that individual parts of language does not possess meaning in isolation from other parts (Johnson 2003:117). "Language is treated as a self-sufficient system of inner relationships" (Ricoeur 1976:6). But, as Ricoeur (1977:23) pointed out, "the alternative 'either the intention or the structure' is vain."

In order to guard against constructing totalities of meaning in understanding, the movement beyond totalities in postmodern thought utilises an approach to texts called deconstruction. Jacques Derrida was the first to write about deconstruction in 1967 (Johnson 2003:117). It is a way to resist the appeal to arrive at a single totality of meaning (Johnson 2003:117), because it understands its task to be open-ended and continual (Johnson 2003:119). It uproots the strict divorce between an autonomous subject conducting an investigation and an object that has to be interpreted, and allows the text to become a subject by posing questions to the reader (Johnson 2003:119). In so doing, a deconstructive approach to reading texts opens up the possibility for the text itself to interrupt a person's construal of meaning by exposing what that understanding might have expelled (Johnson 2003:120).

Also, by returning repeatedly to a text, the reader discovers that it may provoke several meanings and responses over time, thus appreciating that the task of understanding a text is open-ended (Johnson 2003:116; cf. Guignon 2003:38–41). Brueggemann (2003:395) points out that interpretive issues concern not only the reiteration of old meanings but also attentiveness to new meanings. Johnson (2003:118) notes that "the deconstruction of textual meaning can also serve the religious belief that there is something elusive and holy in life that can be neither manipulated nor controlled."

Moving beyond foundations and beyond totalities within postmodern thought has as a consequence the ascertaining of the premodern Christian tradition's acknowledgment that the genres of Scripture and their naming of God are multivalent and open-ended (Wallace 2000:304–305; Johnson 2003:122). "No single revelatory mode and no single model of hermeneutics can be allowed to eclipse the resources of the others" (Thiselton 1998:106).

2.3.3 Toward the Other

The movements beyond foundations and beyond totalities within postmodern thought, in a movement away from self, confront one with the Other. These movements help to overcome the foundations of the own selfhood and limitedness of an own account of the totality of meaning and truth, in order to make space for something/someone other than self (Johnson 2003:123–124). Gademer stated: "Subjectivity and self-consciousness … lost their primacy. Now instead, there is an Other" (Thiselton 1998:103).

As a means to counter the distorting force of vested interest that is a result of the inescapable passions, convictions and perceptions of the interpreter that might lead to ideology in the work of interpretation, Brueggemann (2002:23) suggests that an interpreter submit her/his passions "to brothers and sisters whose own history of distortion is very different from our own and as powerful in its defining force."

Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy represents a strong movement toward the Other within postmodern thought (Johnson 2003:122; Wallace 2000:307). The Other has three different connotations. First, is the philosophical meaning in which "(t)he Other can be understood as anything or anyone that falls outside one's own categories. The realm of one's own selfhood … is constantly confronted by that which is other" (Johnson 2003:123). This Other can be both human and divine.

Second, is the ethical connotation in which the Other represents that which makes a moral claim upon my sensibility and compassion. A claim that exerts itself, not from within my own subjectivity and consciousness, but from without (Johnson 2003:123). However, it is only a self that can be called to responsibility by an Other. According to Ricoeur "self-identity is not merely a result of one's response to the call of the other; it is also what must be presupposed for the call to be heard and understood in the first place" (Wallace 2000:309).

> Conscience … is the site of intersection between selfhood and otherness, the
> place where my ethical ownness "within" and the commanding voice of the other

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"without" indwell one another ... Only a self – as the subject and object, in its conscience, of its own internal dialogue – can have an other-than-self rouse it to its responsibility. Only a self – insofar as it esteems itself as a self capable of reason, agency, and good will – can exercise solicitude for others"

<div align="right">(Wallace 2000:309)</div>

Thirdly, there is the temporal connotation. "The Other is that which is to come, and specifically the liberating state of affairs that is yet to come, the future that is still awaited as a realm of justice and peace" (Johnson 2003:123). Thus, the Other has an eschatological dimension and is both messianic and political (Johnson 2003:123).

Johnson summarises the three dimensions of the Other as follows:

In all three its connotations – philosophical, ethical and temporal-political – the "Other" is not a projection of my own interiority but an exteriority that shatters the protective totality I have constructed around myself. The Other marks an infinity "beyond being" and "beyond totality" that claims me and will not let me go, giving me my unique vocation of responsibility to this need, right here, at this very moment. I must move beyond the foundations of my own selfhood, beyond the limitations of my own version of the totality of meaning and truth, and toward the Other who claims me from on high.

<div align="right">(Johnson 2003:123–124)</div>

2.4   Interpretation as imagination and the world in front of the text

Brueggemann (2003:xi) notes how recent developments in interpretive perspective in Old Testament study have made a difference for the way in which the Old Testament may be accessed as a source and norm for faith. The emergence of newer approaches to and methods of text interpretation that stand alongside historical criticism have made the interface between the ancient Biblical text and the contemporary interpretive community "more poignant and palpable" (Brueggemann 2003:xi).

In the same vein, Ricoeur points out that a reading based on the semiotic of texts does not stand over and against the historical-critical method of text interpretation but that it is rather a question of another technique of text interpretation. "What is specifically different about the semiotic study of texts is that it does not ask about the history of redaction of a text or to what setting the successive authors of their respective audience might have belonged. Instead it asks how a text functions as a text in its current state. If one identifies exegesis with the historical-critical method, the semiotic analysis of texts is not a form of exegesis" (Ricoeur 1981:4). Bosman (1986:14–15) advocates a complimentary approach to Old Testament text interpretation where historical and literary approaches complement each other. Schneider (1990:61) illustrates how such a complimentarity may operate in the exegetical process of a model for translating Proverbs.

Within this milieu of the emergence of other approaches to and methods of text interpretation, this study wants to explore the interpretive contribution that a reading of the text, with an eye towards the unfolding world in front of the text, may make to an understanding, for contemporary readers, of the concept of the fear of the Lord within Proverbs 10:1–15:33. Such a reading of the Biblical text is a much less intimidating reading strategy that can be utilised within the postmodern time with its resistance to propositions and objectivism, to access the Scriptures as "a source and norm for faith" (Brueggemann 2003:xi) in an inviting rather than a prescriptive manner. This reading strategy will be applied to Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord within an understanding of interpretation as imagination.

According to Brueggemann (2002:19) imagination is the vehicle for interpretation. Moreover, he believes that the Biblical text both embodies and insists on ongoing work of imaginative interpretation (Brueggemann 2003:xii). According to him the Christian canon came about as a result of the "*work of tradition*" which is the process of interplay between "*historical reportage*" and "*canonical formation*" (Brueggemann 2003:7, author's italics). This defining enterprise of the biblical formation, transmission, and interpretation may be termed "imaginative remembering" (Brueggemann 2003:7).

He understands "imagination to be the capacity to entertain images of meaning and reality that are out beyond the evident givens of observable experience. That is, imagination is the hosting of "otherwise"" (Brueggemann 2002:17). Biblical literature "is not merely descriptive of a commonsense world; it dares, by artistic sensibility and risk-taking rhetoric, to posit, characterise and vouch for a world beyond the 'common sense'" in which Yahweh is the defining character (Brueggemann 2003:9).

When interpreting the Biblical text, the reader stands in this same line of risk-taking imaginative engagement, reading the text with an eye towards the world beyond the common sense which the text posit, characterise and vouch for. Brueggemann (2002:17) insists, firstly, that imagination is inevitable in the interpretive process, if interpretation is ever to be anything more than simple reiteration. Rather than mere reiteration, interpretation is "the movement of the text beyond itself in fresh ways, often ways never offered until this moment of utterance" (Brueggemann 2002:17). He finds the transformative energy of the text in the "interplay between the *normative* and the *imaginatively playful*" (Brueggemann 2003:xii, author's italics). Imagination is "an inescapable process for those of us who insist that this old text is a contemporary word to us. We transport ourselves out of the twenty-first century back to that ancient world or, conversely, we transpose ancient voices into contemporary voices of authority" (Brueggemann 2002:17).

Secondly, faithful imagination is characteristically not autonomous fantasy but good-faith extrapolation (Brueggemann 2002:16). The confession that the Scriptures are inspired, say more than we can understand and pertains not only to the origin of the text, but to its transmission and interpretation as well (cf. Brueggemann 2002:24). The Spirit meets us afresh in our faithful reading in each new time, place and circumstance (Brueggemann 2002:16). The faithful affirmation that the Biblical text is the Word of God is not a guarantee that an imaginative interpretation will be inspired, but it represents a starting point from which the interpreter may be open to the whispering of the Spirit in and through the text.

Ricoeur finds "*in* reading itself the key to the heuristic functioning of the productive imagination" of texts (Ricoeur 1981:2, author's italics). According to him, the act of reading should be seen as "the meeting point of the itineraries of meaning offered by the text as a production of fiction … and the free course (*parcours*) of meaning brought about by the reader seeking "to apply" the text to life" (Ricoeur 1981:2–3). The intersection between the text and life engenders the imagination according to the Bible (Ricoeur 1981:3).

Ricoeur is interested in the role of figurative texts in the formation of human subjectivity and understands religious studies to be a hermeneutical inquiry into the imaginative potential of myth, symbol, and story to aid our efforts to exist with integrity (Wallace 1995:14). In 'The Bible and the imagination' Ricoeur (1981:3–4) indicates that narrative's capacity for redescribing reality could function as an exemplary paradigm to demonstrate that the operation of parabolisation does not appear alone in the narrative-parable, but that it is implicitly at work everywhere else as the operation of the Biblical form of imagination. His model of the redescribing capacity of narrative texts can thus be applied to Proverbs, even though proverbs are not a narrative genre.

In what follows, the mediating capacity of texts will be explored with the help of a Ricoeurian hermeneutical approach. It is a helpful approach for an application to Proverbs, because of Ricoeur's work on the functioning of metaphor (Sandoval 2006:7–8), which proverbs employ amply. Further, as mentioned above it presents an alternative method of interpretation to historical criticism that can supplement the process of coming to a richer understanding of the text of Proverbs and specifically to come to an understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 10:1–15:33. Also, as mentioned above, it is a way of engaging with the text that might more easily be appropriated within the postmodern juncture.

For Ricoeur (1976:2–6) modern linguistics' achievements, as a result of the fundamental distinction of Ferdinand de Saussure between the two, focused greatly on an understanding of language as *langue* as opposed to *parole*. Thus, the focus of modern linguistics was on *langue*, the code or set of codes, on the basis of which a particular speaker produces *parole*, as a particular message. One of his aims with

the project *Interpretation theory: Discourse and the surplus of meaning* were to rescue discourse from its marginal and precarious exile (Ricoeur 1976).

Discourse, as Ricoeur understands it "is the use of *langue* by somebody to say something to someone about something" (Pellauer 1981:268). It is the use of language to perform illocutionary acts (Wolterstorff 2003:13). The reason for his emphasis on discourse is because philosophy and theology cannot ignore the semantic dimension of language which is necessary for a philosophy of language or a theory of hermeneutics (Pellauer 1981:269).

He points out that "the notion of speech as event provides the key to the transition from a linguistics of the code to a linguistics of the message" (Ricoeur 1976:11). But understanding discourse as event is but one pole, or abstract component, of the concrete polarity of which the other is the meaning pole. Discourse, thus, depends upon the concrete whole that is the dialectical unity of the event and meaning in the sentence (Ricoeur 1976:8–12), where the sentence is the unit of discourse (Ricoeur 1976:32). He formulates this insight as an axiom: "*If all discourse is actualized as an event, all discourse is understood as meaning*" (Ricoeur 1976:12, author's italics).

The dialectic of event and meaning in discourse as the inner dialectic of the meaning of discourse is related to the dialectic of sense and reference in meaning itself.

> To refer is what the sentence does in a certain situation and according to a certain use. It is also what the speaker does when he applies his words to reality. That someone refers to something at a certain time is an event, a speech event. But this event receives its structure from the meaning as sense. The speaker refers to something on the basis of, or through, the ideal structure of the sense. The sense so to speak is traversed by the referring intention of the speaker.
>
> (Ricoeur 1976:20)

It is on the level of the sentence, from where discourse ensues, that the inner or immanent constitutions of the sense are related to the outer or transcendent intention of the reference (Ricoeur 1976:22). The sense is the pure predicative

relation while the reference is its pretention to say something about reality, in short, its truth value (Ricoeur 1976:66).

> [I]t appears as if every discourse can be investigated in terms of both its internal organization, which makes it a message, which can be identified and reidentified, and its referential intention, which is its pretention to say something about something.
>
> (Ricoeur 1976:66)

The relatedness of the inner constitution of the sense and the outer intention of the reference has methodological implications for this study. What a Ricoeurian hermeneutical enquiry aims for, is not just to understand the inner constitution of the sense or the 'what is said'. It also wants to come to an understanding of the outer intention of the reference or that 'about what' the discourse is. Meaning is generated, according to Ricoeur, on two levels and a discourse can only be fully understood if it is investigated in terms of both these levels. For Ricoeur, an explanation of the text is one stage of a hermeneutical enquiry, there is also the possibility of understanding the text in terms of its metaphorical intention. He distinguishes between a surface interpretation and a depth interpretation, between a naïve interpretation and a critical one (Ricoeur 1976:87).

In the light of this methodological consequence it is now necessary to consider the metaphorical bearing of the text of Proverbs. "The proverbs belong to a basic wisdom genre that comes under the heading of the Hebrew term *māšāl*" (McKenzie 1996:3). The Hebrew word מָשָׁל does not signify a specific literary genre, but has a broad signification that is applied to a variety of forms and genres (Scott [1989] 1990:7; Farmer 1991:17). Longman (2006:21) notes that "[i]n the Septuagint the book is called *paroimiai* the Greek word used to translate *māšāl* in the first verse" and points out the strong correlation between this word and παραβολή which can both refer to a wide variety of figurative language (also see Louw & Nida 1988 sv 33.15 where παραβολή and παροιμία are discussed).

Mashal belongs to the connotative aspect of language and it employs nonliteral language, speaking by indirection and suggestion to signify something else (Scott [1989] 1990:10).

> In denotative language the expression is directly related to the content. Such is ordinary language … In connotative language the expression and content themselves stand for an *unnamed* content, and for this very reason such language is suggestive, in need of interpretation. From the proverb or riddle's primary language the interpreter draws a signification not directly implied … Connotative language sets a premium on the activity of the interpreter: one must learn to understand, to interpret *meshalim*. In connotative language something hidden always needs interpretation.

(Scott [1989] 1990:10–11)

Metaphor belongs to the connotative aspect of language. A proverb is not necessarily a metaphor. But many proverbs employ metaphor in its functioning (Scott [1989] 1990:13; cf. Mieder in Sandoval 2006:11). Sandoval (2006:6) points out three aspects of Ricoeur's work on metaphor that are suggestive for studying the discourse in Proverbs, which he applied specifically to a study of the discourse of wealth and poverty in Proverbs. Firstly, Ricoeur offers a helpful model of how metaphors work. Secondly, Ricoeur suggests that a literary text opens up a view of a possible world that eclipses the tangible, objective world – a view that can be said to correspond to the patterns of value and meaning that might be discerned in a particular discourse. And thirdly, he indicates how a text, which may not initially appear metaphorical, might reveal certain aspects of metaphoricity.

2.4.1 The functioning of metaphor

Ricoeur finds the level of the sentence or the semantics of discourse to be the best level from which to consider the functioning of metaphor and thus speaks rather of a metaphorical utterance than of the metaphorical use of words (Ricoeur 1975:77; [1977] 1994:4, 65–100; Sandoval 2006:7).

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A metaphorical utterance is sustained by tension, but this tension is not between the words within the sentence, but rather on the level of interpretation; between a literal and a metaphorical interpretation (Ricoeur 1975:77; 1976:50; Sandoval 2006:7). Writing about parable, Scott notes that as a *mashal*, "parable is connotative; its literal level is supposed to lead to a nonliteral interpretation, a metaphorical interpretation. There is always a tension between the literal and the nonliteral level" (Scott [1989] 1990:47–48). Thus, in Ricoeur's (1975:78) own words: "metaphor does not exist in itself, but in an interpretation."

The strategy which discourse employs, by which the metaphorical statement attains its meaning, is absurdity or what Ricoeur calls *semantic impertinence;* the literal meaning self-destructs and metaphor appears as an answer to a certain inconsistency of the statement interpreted literally (Ricoeur 1975:78; cf. 1976:50). Through the process of self-destruction or transformation of the literal meaning a "sort of twist" is imposed on the words, an expansion of meaning which helps to make sense symbolically of what literally interpreted would not make sense (Ricoeur 1975:78; cf. 1976:50; Sandoval 2006:7).

In this way metaphor is able to establish resemblance. The contradiction in the literal interpretation is resolved by means of the labour of resemblance within the metaphorical statement through which a previously unnoticed "kinship" appear which, rather than merely register, institutes a resemblance (Ricoeur 1975:79; 1976:51; Sandoval 2006:7). Scott ([1989] 1990:49-51) points out Lakoff and Johnson's understanding of metaphor as employing a metaphorical network to which item A belongs to understand item B. For them "[t]he essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson [1980] 2005:104). "Resemblance involves a kind of cognitive and effective mapping between two different conceptual domains" (Sandoval 2006:7). The metaphorical network structures the experience, behaviour, and understanding of the referent, that other reality it stands for (Scott [1989] 1990:50–51).

In the whole metaphorical process there are, however, not two significations, a primary (literal) and a secondary (metaphorical), but in a single movement the interpreter is transferred from one level to another. The primary (literal) signification

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of a metaphorical utterance is the path to the secondary (metaphorical) signification and the secondary comes by means of, or through, the literal (Sandoval 2006:8). In this way the metaphorical process is essentially a creation of meaning and says something new about reality (Sandoval 2006:8). It is what Ricoeur calls a semantic innovation (Ricoeur 1975:79). Eco (1984:88) states: "As an ornament, the metaphor is of no interest to us, because, if it says more pleasantly that which can be said otherwise, then it could be explained wholly within the scope of a semantics of denotation. We are interested in the metaphor as an additive, not substitutive, instrument of knowledge."

2.4.2 The world in front of the text

The working of the metaphorical process which has been shown to be a creation of meaning are not limited to the level of only the sentence. On the level of the text, as a work of discourse, "[m]etaphorical language is able to construct a new vision of reality" (Sandoval 2006:9). It has to do with the meaning of the text as reference (Ricoeur 1976:19–22).

Ricoeur distinguishes two levels of reference (Scott [1989] 1990:48). A first order reference tied to a literal interpretation which is weakened and leads to a second order reference that suspends the literal level (Ricoeur 1975:84; cf. 1976 56–57; Sandoval 2006:9). A text may not only be describing reality in a literal, or empirically verifiable way, but may, through the literal meaning come to a metaphorical meaning and actively be creating a symbolical world (Sandoval 2006:10).

"At this second level, narrative is a model for redescribing reality. The mimesis of fiction is not a copy of reality but its redescription" (Scott [1989] 1990:47–48). Thus Ricoeur (1976:59) describes the poetic project as "one of destroying the world as we ordinarily take it for granted" in order "to bring to language modes of being that ordinary vision obscures or even represses" (Ricoeur 1976:60). Wallace (1995:12) understands it thus: "The aim of an imaginative text is the creative imitation of human action – even as the purpose of metaphor … is to redescribe the actual world in terms of possibility." The text constructs for the reader a symbolic-textual world (Sandoval 2006:10).

In this way a text has the ability to "change one's view of, or relationship to, reality" (Sandoval 2006:9). "By virtue of its power to fuse the world of the text and the world of the reader" (Wallace 2000:305), the text draws the reader into the world that the text unfolds in front of itself (Ricoeur 1977:23).

2.4.3 Aspects of metaphoricity of the text

Sandoval (2006:10) points out that paremiologists generally recognise the use of metaphoric language to be a staple of proverbial speech. Many proverbs employ metaphor in its functioning (Scott [1989] 1990:13; cf. Mieder in Sandoval 2006:11) and thus necessarily contribute to the metaphorical aspects of proverbs. It is also generally recognised, not only by paremiologist scholars but also by casual hearers or readers of proverbs, that they are by their regular usage – although they may make sense when taken literally – concerned to say something metaphorically about human reality (Sandoval 2006:11). The context within which a proverb is performed, commonly function as a prompt or indicator that the proverb may, indeed should, be understood metaphorically (Sandoval 2006:11). This may function as one of three cues that the text of Proverbs may be read with an eye toward its metaphorical bearing.

Although the proverbs that we have in the Biblical book of Proverbs are the result of the creative process, including the collection and eventually redaction of the material by a scribal elite (Sandoval 2006:17, Whybray 1994:157–165; Ansberry 2010:1), it resembles and is related to folk-like proverbial sayings (Sandoval 2006:10). The fact of the collection and redaction of Proverbs severed the proverbs from their original performance context that is crucial for understanding proverbs (Sandoval 2006:12–13, 17; also Schneider 1990:91). However, it was inserted into a new performance context, namely the textual context of the Book of Proverbs – a collection of proverbial sayings. This new performance context, together with the book's prologue (Proverbs 1:2–7) that "acts as a hermeneutical guide for the reader and provides a strong, initial literary cue for recognising the metaphorical aspects of the text" (Sandoval 2006:18), may function as yet another cue that the text of Proverbs may be read with an eye toward its metaphorical bearing.

An extra-contextual cue that the text of Proverbs may be read with an eye toward its metaphorical bearing may be found in the "extravagance", a "mixing of the ordinary with the extra-ordinary, which serves as a sign of its metaphoricity" (Sandoval 2006:16). Sandoval (2006:16–17) considers the implication of this cue that is augmented by Ricoeur's notion of tension in metaphorical statements for the text of Proverbs. The extravagant claims of the act-consequence nexus in the book of Proverbs, with its assertion that the wise and righteous will prosper and the wicked perish, serves as a case in point. For Ricoeur, according to Sandoval (2006:16–17) there may be three levels of tension operative in a text: 1) The tension between terms in a metaphor (i.e. between the tenor and the vehicle) and/or 2) the tension in interpretation that comes about when one attempts to understand a metaphorical utterance literally, as well as/or 3) a tension "at the level of reality itself between description and redescription" (Ricoeur 1975:95), between the world the text figures and normal perceptions of the world of objects (Sandoval 2006:17).

It may happen that little or no tension is to be perceived on the first two levels of a metaphorical discourse, thus between the terms in the metaphorical utterance or between a literal and metaphorical interpretation of an utterance. Then the extra-contextual cue to read the text with an eye towards its metaphorical bearing may be found in the tension between the reader's normal perception of the world of objects and the world the text projects.

2.5   A Ricoeurian hermeneutical approach

Reese ([1979] 1990:384-388) gives a convenient summarising description of Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach. According to him "Ricoeur organises his considerations around four poles" (Reese [1979] 1990:384) namely distanciation, objectification, projecting of a world and appropriation. These will operate as guidelines for this study. If the structuring of the text (this will be explored in chapter 3) was aimed at projecting a world (this will be explored in chapter 4), Reese ([1979] 1990:392), in accord with Ricoeur, concludes that the main task of an interpreter of a text, is to clarify the horizons of that symbolic-textual world for modern readers (this will be explored in chapter 5). Each of these considerations will be applied to

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Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord, to facilitate a reading of the text that can be relevant for modern-day readers.

Distanciation entails the emancipation of the message of a written text, which is a distinctive kind of discourse, as differentiated from speech, from the intentional horizon of its author and initial communicative setting (Reese [1979] 1990:384). In this study this consideration leads to a reader oriented reading strategy.

Objectification implies the mode of discourse of the text as a means of production (Reese [1979] 1990:385-386). The message of the text cannot be severed from its vehicle and consequently it is imperative to be conscious of the linguistic system of a text in order to grasp the kinds of meaning and representations of reality that are made possible by that particular rhetorical vehicle (Alter 1985:4; Berlin [1985] 1992:17). In this study this consideration will lead in chapter 3 to the question of the significance of reading Proverbs as poetry. The crafting of Proverbs as a work of art is an urgent invitation to a profound life of faith and the discourse calls for a response (cf. Reese [1979] 1990:391).

The projection of a symbolic world by the text for the reader is the consequence of the text's meaning as both sense and reference (Reese [1979] 1990:386-387). The text's meaning as sense will be distinguished through a semantic enquiry (language as *lingue*) or the 'what is said' according to Ricoeur in chapter 3. In chapter 4 the meaning as reference, distinguished on the level of semiotics (language as *parole*) or the 'about what it is said' according to Ricoeur, will be distinguished. The text references a symbolic textual world that is a redescription of reality (Ricoeur 1975:87; cf. Sandoval 2006:6-10). This will be considered with specific reference to the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 10:1–15:33.

Appropriation or the self-understanding arising from the text is the last stage of a hermeneutical inquiry in a Ricoeuerian manner (Reese [1979] 1990:387-388). Through a fusion of the world of the text and the world of the reader, the reader is invited to inhabit this projected symbolic textual world (Ricoeur 1977:25). The hermeneutical appropriation of the text or the subjective, existential moment of personal decision ensues from the semantic moment of objective meaning (Pellauer

1981:267). In chapter 5 this invitation will be probed in terms of the threefold movement within postmodern thought and a possible understanding of the fear of the Lord, according to Proverbs 10:1–15:33, for a contemporary reader will be formulated.

2.6   Proverbs: Prose or poetry?

The question of whether to read Proverbs as prose or poetry must now be considered. It is necessary because as Alter (1985:4) observes, it is important to get some handle on the linguistic system being used in a text in order to understand what kinds of meaning, what representations of human and divine reality, are made possible by the particular rhetorical vehicle (cf. Berlin [1985] 1992:17). It becomes an important key to the interpretation of the text (Burden 1986:40; Loader 1986:112; Human 1999:357). As mentioned earlier, Ricoeur (1977:15) in his hermeneutical efforts cautioned against the separation of the form and content of a discourse. Many scholars in fact recognise that the form in which a message is encoded and the content that the form communicates, is inextricably bound together so that the form becomes a means by which the writer uses the resources of literary expression available to capture a fuller understanding of the subject (Alter 1985:183–184; Burden 1986:40; Potgieter 2002:1372). Davis (2009:266) brings to attention that "biblical proverbs represent language in its most condensed form."

A text may be described according to at least two criteria, namely 1) how the text is organised and 2) how the text function (Deist 1986:23). Specific situations and/or contexts require specific ways in which a message may be coded and in this way set patterns of communication (whether oral or written) develop within a community/culture that in time becomes stereotyped (Deist 1986:24). Identifying such stereotypical communication patterns may help the listener or reader to better understand the communicated message (Deist 1986:24).

Robert Lowth (1753) identified parallelism as such a stereotypical communication pattern in the Biblical text and promoted it to a place of prominence in Biblical studies (Berlin [1985] 1992:1; Burden 1986:49; Gottwald [1985] 1987:522), establishing it as the major organising principle or key distinguishing characteristic of Hebrew verse

(Landy 1984:62; Byargeon 2002:281; Alter 1985:204; Petersen & Richards 1992:2; Nel 1992:135). However, the prevalence of semantic parallelism has been questioned (Alter 1985:3–4; also Petersen & Richards 1992:1–2; Burden 1986:51). Kugel (1981) questioned the equation of poetry and parallelism. He raised reservations about whether one could actually differentiate between prose and poetry within the Bible and brought again to consideration the question as to what the formal elements that make up the writings of the Scriptures are (cf. Berlin [1985] 1992:4–7; Alter 1985:4).

Alter (1985:4) disagrees with Kugel and distinguishes between prose and poetry. Accordingly he reads Proverbs as poetry. He states that in purely formal terms, the poetic character of the text is nowhere more evident than in the book of Proverbs (Alter 1985:163). Landy (1984:66–67), however, sides with Kugel in stating that "there is no absolute dividing line between poetry and prose in the Bible." He speaks rather of the poetic and prosaic ends of a continuum; "'poetry' and 'prose' are on a continuum whose extremes are not 'high' and 'low', nor 'form' and 'content', but two linguistic relations to reality" (Landy 1984:68). Berlin ([1985] 1992:16) sums up her viewpoint, concluding that "[p]oetry uses parallelism as its constitutive or constructive device, while nonpoetry, though it contains parallelism, does not structure its message on a systematic use of parallelism." Concerning specifically within the wisdom corpus, Loader (1986:107) distinguishes between poetic texts and prosaic texts.

The lack of consensus among scholars is evident. With Petersen & Richards (1992:2) this study goes out from the presupposition that the lack of scholarly consensus need not prevent the reader of the Biblical text from reading and understanding, even enjoying, the text. In fact, Alter (1985:205) notes that "a good many of the complex effects of the poem are communicated to the reader or listener subliminally, though a conscious awareness of certain salient formal devices may help focus attentiveness" (cf. also Petersen & Richards 1992:2). Human (1999:357) notes that the lack of unanimity concerning almost all aspects of Hebrew poetry affords the interpretation possibilities an open court. Petersen & Richards (1992:3) even caution towards holding a tentative notion of the theory of Hebrew poetry, or in

their words "to hold those theories lightly". The reason being, that our understanding of the theory of Hebrew poetry is not precise (Petersen & Richards 1992:3).

Be as it may, insights from scholars that are in disagreement may be used in a single study with great fruitfulness. Insights from different scholars with differing opinions on the question of the "poetry-prose continuum" (Petersen & Richards 1992:13–14) will be used to formulate the suppositions of this study. The insights used will reflect the particular scholar's viewpoint and choice of terminology, for example Alter will speak of poetry while Kugel will speak of the continuum of low or high rhetorical style.

From what follows it will be clear that this study presupposes that poetry is indeed discernable from prose and that Proverbs, and in this case the proverbs relevant to this study, will be read as poetry. From this presupposition five suppositions follow. Firstly, the dividing line between prose and poetry is not so clear cut, especially when one considers that there are poetical prose (e.g. Psalms 78) and prosaic poetry (e.g. Exodus 2:1–7) (Burden 1986:57; Petersen & Richards 1992:13). All imaginative prose has a poetic quality; and a great deal of poetry is prosaic (Landy 1984:78). But this does not mean that there is no differentiation between prose and poetry (Burden 1986:57; Petersen & Richards 1992:14).

Secondly, poetics concern both poetry and prose and it is for this reason no objection to a theory that it is applicable to both (Landy 1984:78). Barton's (1996:205) definition of poetics is helpful: "A poetics is an attempt to specify how literature 'works', how it enables us to perceive the meanings we do perceive in it." Parallelism, and so also meter and any other figure of speech or poetic principle cannot be elevated to *the* defining principle in Hebrew poetry. Although, as Fox (2004:165) notes, parallelism is clearly crucial to the workings of the aphorisms in Proverbs. Parallelism in prose, as in poetry, is the sign of the poetic function (Landy 1984:78; Berlin [1985] 1992:9) and the poetic function is "the set (*Einstellung*) towards the message as such, focus on the message for its own sake" (Jacobson, in Berlin [1985] 1992:9; also Ricoeur 1976:36).

Thirdly, and related to the second supposition, poetry is a text convention according to which poets organise their texts (Burden 1986:68). Alter (1985:167) states that as an expression of mainline Wisdom activity Proverbs stresses the presupposition that wisdom is a language craft. It is neither merely the versification of traditional wisdom, a formal means for impressing a message on mind and memory (Alter 1985:163), nor a "translation" into parallel versets of moral precepts (Alter 1985:183). Poetic texts uses the resources of poetic expression to achieve a fuller apprehension of its subject (Alter 1985:183), and this is very evident in Proverbs.

From this, the fourth supposition flows. Alter (1985:205) words it aptly: "Poetry is a special way of imagining the world, or to put this in more cognitive terms, a special mode of thinking with its own momentum and its own peculiar advantages." Texts with a wisdom perspective, and it is especially evident in Proverbs, use this special way of imagining the world to reference the symbolic world that the wisdom scribes envision for their readers through the text. Figures of speech and poetic devices such as metaphor, antithetic parallelism and chiasm are used to underline the wisdom understanding of reality (cf. Loader 1986:107–110).

Lastly, the connection between metaphoric play and poetry provides an important key to understanding Proverbs as poetry. Ricoeur (1976:46) quotes Beardsley's observation that metaphor is a poem in miniature. According to Williams ([1987] 1990:275) "[m]etaphoric play is the most important element of wisdom poetics." Proverbs employ it for the reader to imagine or picture a symbolic reality. A metaphor is an inherently playful and imaginative way of making sense of reality and it works because of the similarity as well as the dissimilarity of the vehicle and tenor (Melchert 1998:71–72). The text places considerable trust in the readers for it is their responsibility to fill the gaps that a metaphor necessarily leaves, but if the metaphor is made too clear and the ambiguity settled for clarity and precision, the metaphoric play is blocked and the metaphor destroyed (Melchert 1998:71–72; cf. Ricoeur 1976:52).

There are several limiting factors, "what we do not know and are unlikely to recover about Biblical poetry" (Alter 1985:4), that needs to be kept in mind. The actual sound of Biblical Hebrew remain a matter of conjecture (Alter 1985:4) as there are no native

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speakers around in order for us to hear the sound of the language (Watson [1984] 2005:46) and figure out the meter (Gottwald [1985] 1987:523–524). Alter (1985:4) notes that the indications of stress and vocalisation that the Masoretes supplied in the Masoretic Text were codified at a very late stage, well over a millennium after the poems were composed and centuries after Hebrew had ceased to be commonly spoken. Also, the exact nuances of meaning of many Biblical words are not clear and this is aggravated by the fact that the language used in poetic texts presents a concentration of rare locutions and heightened rhetorical style (Alter 1985:4).

Another limiting factor is that there is no account of the patterning of Hebrew poetry from the time of its composition (Holladay 1999:20). Holladay highlights two factors concerning this dearth, raising our uncertainty about any analysis of Hebrew poetry. One is that the corpus of material is relatively restricted and the other is that there are no texts intact from the period of their composition (Holladay 1999:20). The poems preserved within the canon of Scripture was subject to a long redaction history with all of its altering effects, not to mention the history of the transmission of the texts, again with all of its altering effects (Holladay 1999:21).

A last limiting factor that must be kept in mind when reading Proverbs is that readers of Hebrew poetry are confronted with a formal problem. Alter (1985:5) points out that Biblical poems are not set out as poetry in the traditional Hebrew texts, which complicates the reading and understanding of poetic texts. Landy (1984:68) likewise states that there is a lack of context markers signalling the presence of poetry. Where context markers are discernable (e.g. when a text identifies itself as poetry by stating that it is a song or signalling it through purely conventional notions for poetry, like alphabetic acrostic) there is always a subjective element that interpreters read the signal in one way or another (Landy 1984:69). The delimitation of poetic units, whether of a poem as a whole or the comprising colons, is often obscured by this formal limitation. In the case of Proverbs 10–31, however, the unit of poetic expression is almost exclusively the single independent proverb taking up one poetic line of which "the boundaries are so clearly marked by symmetries of meaning, syntax and rhythm that for once there is an almost complete congruence between the traditional division into verses and the actual poetic lineation" (Alter 1985:163).

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Longman (2006:33) notes that to read Proverbs well, one must understand how to read poetry. Research, since the late seventies, confirms that the nature of Hebrew poetry can only be unlocked with a comprehensive approach (Human 1999:359). Alter (1985:184) affirms that the poetic vehicle makes a vital difference in communication and that "an awareness of the nuances of poetic form, seen against the general background of poetic practice and convention in the Bible, will help us grasp the liveliness, the depth of experience-wise reflection, the intellectual vigour, of these didactic texts."

2.7   Methodology

The approach of this study is a literary approach: it wishes to consider the Bible as literature, with deliberation on its distinct forms and genres (Barr in Schneider 1990:59; Gottwald [1985] 1987:22–24). The word methodology creates the impression of a set reading strategy or prescriptive way of going about the task of interpretation, in order to yield through method, the meaning of a text (cf. Human 1999:356). This is a very limiting definition of methodology. Thus, Human's (1999:356) caution will be heeded, that methodological considerations are a means to an end (and not an end in itself) serving the end which is to contribute to a richer reading of the text. It is necessary to acknowledge the fact that a specific approach taken in the reading of a text, ultimately results in limited possibilities of meaning (Human 1999:357).

As this study wants to come to an understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord within Proverbs 10:1–15:33 for modern-day readers, a reader oriented method of Biblical analysis will be followed. Schneider (1990:60) aptly words it: "In their canonical form and their translated form, sapiential insights continue to be geared towards potential audiences, which have to be instructed, admonished and guided in the ways of Biblical wisdom by means of the text which witness to ancient sapiential insights." The aim is to accomplish a reading of the proverbs, in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord, that will be relevant to the contemporary reader of the text.

Toward this aim, this study will investigate the poetics of the relevant proverbs in the book of Proverbs. "A poetics is an attempt to specify how literature 'works', how it enables us to perceive the meanings we do perceive in it … A poetics of the Biblical text – or of any text – is interested in how the text is articulated, in how it comes to convey the meaning it does" (Barton 1996:205).

As such, this study is interested in the text in its present shape in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) (cf. Sandoval 2007:457–459; Human 1999:362) and will take a synchronic approach. Attention will not be given to diachronic considerations such as authorship and the history of the formation of the compositions et cetera, not implying that these historical critical considerations are insignificant (cf. Schneider 1990:61). Also questions concerning the reception of the text in different times and communities, that is, reception criticism, will not be afforded attention except when regarded in connection with text-critical considerations.

In the light of this, it is necessary now to elaborate on the text that is to be used as the Biblical material is not represented by a uniform textual tradition (Frydrych 2002:5; Brotzman 1994:37–62; Deist 1988:198–201). At the outset it is important to state that the central concern of this study is not with the text *per se* but in an understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord that the text communicates to the contemporary reader (cf. Frydrych 2002:6).

Frydrych (2002:6) states that three principal options are open to any interpreter of a text: "to use one particular textual tradition, to use an eclectic text, or to use a text of one of the principal traditions occasionally corrected in the light of other textual witnesses." Deist (1988:1) describes the evaluative task of textual criticism from two points of view. On the one hand it aims at the establishment of a 'correct' reading, thereby paving the way for exegesis. On the other, textual criticism is an integral part of exegesis aimed at understanding the text within a wider textual context (cf. Brotzman 1994:20). What the correct reading may be might be any one of three possibilities; from recovering the *autographa*, to the canonical shape of the text, to reconstructing the oldest text possible, with all of the problems and difficulties of each of these endeavours (Deist 1988:198–201). Which one is to be chosen

depends on the aims of the study and the philosophical or theological assumptions that the study makes.

Sandoval advises: "For those concerned with understanding the Hebrew *book* of Proverbs … the collections as we have them in MT must be the locus of primary attention" (Sandoval 2006:39, author's italics). He states that the canonical shape or final literary text (and context) of Proverbs is what is most unproblematically available (Sandoval 2007:458–459). The main tradition followed in this study will be that of the Masoretic Text (𝔐), but not to the extent of ignoring the nature of the formation and transmission of ancient texts (cf. Frydrych 2002:6). For the purposes of this study, which is, as mentioned above, not interested in the text *per se*, but in an understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord that the text communicates to the modern-day reader, the text of *BHS* will be sufficient. Sanders (2005) notes that the "BH editions have made the text of the Hebrew Bible available for critical use among Christian and Jewish scholars because they included a critical apparatus that offered a succinct history of the text of problem passages."

Two more recommendations with regard to the text critical considerations of the text will be helpful. Alter (1987:26) accentuates that the application of proper literary analysis of the Biblical text is an essential prerequisite to a sounder textual scholarship. An understanding of the distinctive poetics informing Biblical poetry will help in many instances to make plain sense of a puzzling text (Alter 1987:27). In many cases emendation of the text grounded in a perceived defectiveness, compositeness or redundancy will be unnecessary and avoided (Alter 1987:26–27; cf. Schwab 2009:459).

In the case of the Septuagint (𝔊) of Proverbs, Frydrych (2002:7) notes the study of Cook (1997) that demonstrates a significant intentional reworking of the text by the translator that produced the 𝔊, resulting in the representation of a quite seperate tradition. This tradition according to Frydrych (2002:7) seems to have influenced the other versions to some extent. Thus, he cautions that the value of 𝔊 and other versions when dealing with the Hebrew text is limited for text-critical purposes (cf. Murphy 1998:xxvi).

Having established the text that will be used and the text critical considerations the translation strategy will next be contemplated. MacArthur (2005) suggests that the "grammatical principle" will be helpful in illuminating the meaning of a text: "This requires that we understand the basic grammatical structure of each sentence in the original language." He explains that simple questions such as: "To whom do the pronouns refer? What is the tense of the main verb?" may illuminate the meaning of the text.

A more literal style of translating the proverbs will be followed. A translation of the text cannot be made without, and inevitably presupposes, interpretation and thus it is necessary to stay as close as possible to the actual idioms and the lexical values of the original, even to the point of awkwardness (cf. Alter 1985:32). Murphy (1998:252–253) explains the advantages of a more literal style of translating Hebrew proverbs as being twofold. The different idiom becomes a challenge to the reader, an objective inherent to proverbial sayings that often wants to highlight paradoxes and upset preconceived ideas. Also, the single independent proverbs in the book of Proverbs are not prose and inserting into them prosaic features during the translation process may destroy the ambiguities that the proverb might deliberately be exploiting.

Longman (2006:33) notes that the three major characteristics of poetry, terseness, parallelism and intense use of imagery, stresses the poetic features of Proverbs. Frydrych (2002:43) states that "(t)he power of a proverb as a literary form resides principally in two things: brevity and openness to reinterpretation." Schneider (1990:79) points out that "[f]ull explication – that is the elimination of any kind of ambiguity, through expansion and redundancy – can easily defeat the purpose of the gnomic sayings. It hampers their function as texts meant for ongoing extratextual performances." Thus, the presupposition of this study is that ambiguity or double meanings in interpretation need not be avoided, but may even contribute to understanding the symbolic richness of the text. It is, however, difficult to fluently translate double meanings and this will be indicated not in the translation but in the discussion of the consideration of the meaning and poetics of the proverb.

In the light of this it may be said that a more literal translation of the proverbs does not imply a literal interpretation of the text and this study will undertake a reading attentive of the symbolic aspects of the text of Proverbs. Sandoval (2006:67) persuasively points out his understanding of the strategy that Proverbs employ in order to communicate its world view and values, grounded in his reading of the prologue (Proverbs 1:2–7), against the backdrop of which a symbolic reading of the content of Proverbs may make more sense.

He suggests that one should regard the book more fundamentally as moral instruction than a simple guide to success (Sandoval 2006:67). The prologue, together with the "two ways" rhetoric of chapters 1–9 especially, hermeneutically orients the reader towards exploring the book's figurative structures. Also, the act-consequence rhetoric of the book, rather than being regarded in an overly literalistic manner as reflecting the sages' quasi-empirical observations of the world, should be seen as providing the symbolic framework within which the values and virtues the text wishes to communicate, find meaning and make sense.

The result of "attending to the book's rhetorical and figurative imagination" is that it reveals that the ancient sages of Proverbs were not terribly concerned to offer sociological observations or simple advice to their hearers. Rather the rhetoric in Proverbs "is much more intimately linked to the book's overall effort to construct a particular moral identity for the hearer or reader; its attempt to form a wise person" (Sandoval 2006:70). It has to do primarily with the illocutionary force of wisdom sentences and instruction as Frydrych (2002:41) points out. Thus, Frydrych draws a useful distinction between "the cognitive part of a worldview, i.e., what a person thinks of the world, and its practical element, i.e., how in practical terms this cognitive perspective projects itself into the person's behaviour" and states that the latter is what Proverbs has in mind (Frydrych 2002:11). While attending to rhetorical and figurative matters the illocutionary force of the discourse of Proverbs will be illuminated, laying bare the poetics of the text.

In this process, context may also be helpful in discerning the workings and meanings of the proverbs. MacArthur (2005) describes three contexts that affect the interpretation and understanding of the proverbs. Firstly, the setting in which they

were spoken or the performance context affects the interpretation and understanding of a proverb. This is largely lost in the case of Proverbs but may still be inferred from the content of the proverb (Sandoval 2006:14). Secondly, the historical context of the time of its composition, from which Proverbs draw illustrations to convey principles and truths, also affect the interpretation and understanding of the proverbs. Thirdly, the setting of the book as a whole within the rest of the canon affects the interpretation and understanding of the proverbs.

He does not mention the immediate literary context of individual proverbs within the book of Proverbs. Some scholars, for example McKane (1970), maintain that the only significant unit to consider in the interpretation of Proverbs is the individual wisdom sentence as a complete unit. They deny that the literary context of the proverb can be considered to contribute to the meaning of the individual proverb in the interpretation process.

However, several scholars have shown this also to be relevant when interpreting individual proverbs (Van Leeuwen 1988; Hildebrandt 1988; Heim 2001; Byargeon 2002:292; Fox 2009:478–482). Much effort has gone into the recognition of a grouping or clustering of proverbs on the basis of different criteria, for example sound, word or thematic patterns. The problem, however, is identifying a method for the recognition of such larger structures (Longmann 2008:548–549; Fox 2009:479–480; Weeks 2010:28–30).

With regard to the Yahweh-sayings some scholars (cf. Whybray 1979; Heim 2001; Dell 2006:109–124; Hildebrandt 2010:8) recognise the strategic placement of the Yahweh-sayings within the book of Proverbs and specifically of the Yahweh-sayings in Proverbs 10:1–22:16. Whether one argues, in this case, together with Whybray (1979) that this is evidence for a later deliberate Yahwistic reworking of the older secular or mundane material, or along with Heim and Dell recognise these as part of the formative structure of the collections (Dell 2006:109), the acknowledgment of the literary context they provide recognises that these sayings "are important in their own right as showing the religious nature of many proverbs and of the proverbial worldview" (Dell 2006:124), and that "mention of Yahweh or the fear of Yahweh is integral to the texts themselves" (Dell 2006:146).

The premise of this study is that the primary source of meaning is the individual proverb; the nature of which is to be self-contained and thus understood independently (Frydrych 2002:8, Clifford 1999:108; also cf. Heim 2001:18). However, this is not to deny that the literary context may add certain additional nuances to the interpretation of an individual proverb (Whybray [1979] 1990), nor that the whole of Proverbs is most definitely more than the sum of its parts (Frydrych 2002:8; Gottwald [1985] 1987:564).

2.8   Procedure

The goal of this study is twofold. Firstly, to bring together hermeneutics and wisdom literature by testing a reading strategy that can do justice to Scriptural authority, yet also board the anti-authoritative sentiments of postmodern thought. Secondly, in the process of testing this reading strategy on Proverbs 10:1-15:33 with specific reference to the fear of Yahweh, a possible understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord for contemporary readers will be inferred.

In order to achieve these aims the following procedure will be followed. After an exposition of the hermeneutical influences and the methodological and procedural considerations that chapter 2 expound, chapter 3 will identify and explore the relevant proverbs in terms of explanation, or the 'what is said', according to Ricoeur. Chapter 4 will focus on understanding and explore the referential intention of those proverbs identified in chapter 3, or the 'about what it is said', according to Ricoeur. Chapter 5 will explore the appropriation of the text by the reader and formulated a possible understanding of the fear of the Lord/Yahweh (the terms are used interchangeably) for contemporary readers of Proverbs 10:1–15:33. Chapter 6 will give an overview of this study and state the thesis and concluding remarks.

The procedure thus follows an inductive reasoning methodology. In the context of this study inductive reasoning consists of inferring general principles about the fear of the Lord from specific instances, namely the proverbs in 10:1–15:33 that deal with the fear of the Lord. This is consistent with both the nature of the material in Proverbs, as well as with the pursuit of the three movements within postmodern

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thought. The Biblical proverbial material, instead of grand narratives and general theories built on secure foundations, offers according to Lawrie (2006:74–75), local truths that are fluid and open to contradiction, or rather metaphors still aware of their distance from any putative reality. The hope is to come to an understanding, that moves beyond foundations, beyond totalities and toward the Other, of the symbolic world with specific reference to the fear of the Lord that Proverbs 10:1–15:33 constructs for its readers and what it might mean for a contemporary reader.

2.9   Summary

Hermeneutics

- Heitink (1993:175) describes the hermeneutical issue as probably the most far-reaching question of our time. Thus, this study will explore the contribution that hermeneutics may make to the interpretation of wisdom literature and in particular Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord.
- Ricoeur (1976:90) insists on defining the hermeneutic task in terms of the quality of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text as the reference of the text. In the light of this definition the question: 'How may Proverbs 10:1–15:33 be read in order to come to a better understanding of the notion of the fear of the Lord that it expresses?' comes into consideration.
- Hermeneutics represents more of an attitude or deportment than a method (Thiselton 2009:2). This will be the constant point of departure for this study.
- The distinction between rules and methods on the one hand and principles, attitudes and conditions on the other, relates to the two dimensions of hermeneutics namely the German words *Erklärung* (explanation) and *Verstehen* (understanding) (Thiselton 2009:9). These will come into consideration in chapter 3 and 4 respectively with *Erklärung* being the means to come to *Verstehen* as the main objective of this study.
- Two stages can be distinguished in the transition from a narrow conception of hermeneutics, as a branch of theology, to the broader understanding of philosophical hermeneutics.

1) The shift, in the early nineteenth century inaugurated by Schleiermacher, to the idea of a general hermeneutics applicable to all forms of human expression.

2) The ontological hermeneutics, developed by Heidegger and Gadamer, that attempted to clarify the *being* of the interpreter (Guignon 2003:26).

It is within this broader understanding of philosophical hermeneutics that this study operates.

- The two stages in the transition from the narrow conception of hermeneutics, as a branch of theology, to a broader philosophical understanding of hermeneutics can be better understood against the backdrop of the difference between practising hermeneutics within the framework of more traditional philosophy and a philosophical hermeneutical approach. This study aims at a philosophical hermeneutical approach.

  1) The turnaround of the subject-object scheme in traditional epistemology caused interpreters of texts who traditionally focused more attention on the rational critical dimension, with the rise of hermeneutical philosophy, to shift focus to the more creative dimension (Thiselton 2009:8). This study wishes to consider the text not merely as the object of the enquiry but as a subject in a creative conversation.

  2) The realisation that texts are not entities in abstraction, but reflect concrete situations calls attention to the illocutionary force of texts (Thiselton 2009:10–11). They come into being within very specific situations and wants to perform certain tasks in addressing that situation. This study acknowledges the illocutionary force of Proverbs that aim at the formation of the moral character of the reader (Bland 1998:228; Ansberry 2011:125) and wants to explore the specific contribution that the concept of the fear of the Lord makes to the illocutionary force of the text.

  3) The insight that texts are not entities in abstraction is counterbalanced with the awareness that interpreters are neither. An interpreter does not approach a text fully devoid of any knowledge, detached and objective (Clark 2006:62). This has led to the formulation of the idea of the hermeneutical circle or spiral (Thiselton 2009:12) that will be taken into account in the hermeneutical enquiry.

4) Hermeneutics aims to be interdisciplinary and leans heavily on the insights of several disciplines, as will be the case with this study, whereas traditional philosophical enquiry is limited to the insights of philosophy (Thiselton 2009:34).

- Biblical hermeneutics investigates more specifically how we read, understand, apply and respond to Biblical texts (Thiselton 2009:4).

The threefold movement within postmodern thought

- According to Walter Brueggemann (1993:vii): "There can be little doubt that we are in a wholly new interpretive situation" that is known as postmodern.

- In recent years postmodern thought has been paving the way for a new understanding of rationality (Johnson 2003:110) and many scholars have been advocating the opportunities that this shift may hold for Biblical interpretation and theology.

- Johnson (2003) identified a threefold movement within postmodern thought that can be described as a movement beyond foundations, beyond totality and toward the Other, that will be helpful in the task of considering the opportunity that the new interpretive situation presents modern-day readers of the Bible to read and interpret the Scriptures in a fresh way.

- The concept of the fear of the Lord, as it is found in Proverbs 10:1–15:33, will function as a point in case to explore the interpretive opportunities that postmodern thought presents to the contemporary reader of the text.

Interpretation as imagination and the world in front of the text

- Brueggemann (2003:xi) notes that the emergence of newer approaches to and methods of text interpretation in Old Testament study, that stand alongside historical criticism, have made a difference for the way in which the Old Testament may be accessed as a source and norm for faith. He understands imagination to be the vehicle for interpretation (Brueggemann 2002:19) and believes that the Biblical text both embodies and insists on ongoing work of imaginative interpretation (Brueggemann 2003:xii).

- Thus, this study wants to explore the interpretive contribution that a reading of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with an eye toward the working of the text based on the

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semiotic of the text, namely with an eye towards the unfolding world in front of the text, may make to an understanding, for contemporary readers, of the concept of the fear of the Lord within the text.

- Biblical literature "is not merely descriptive of a commonsense world; it dares, by artistic sensibility and risk-taking rhetoric, to posit, characterise and vouch for a world beyond the 'common sense'" in which Yahweh is the defining character (Brueggemann 2003:9).

- When interpreting Scripture the reader stands in this same line of risk-taking imaginative engagement, reading the text with an eye towards the world beyond the 'common sense' that the text conceives, portrays and vouches for.

- Ricoeur finds "*in* reading itself the key to the heuristic functioning of the productive imagination" of texts (Ricoeur 1981:2, author's italics). According to him the act of reading should be seen as the meeting point of the itineraries of meaning, offered by the text as a production of fiction and the free course of meaning brought about by the reader seeking "to apply" the text to life (Ricoeur 1981:2–3). The intersection between the text and life engenders the imagination according to the Bible (Ricoeur 1981:3).

- It is on the level of the sentence, from where discourse ensues, that the inner or immanent constitutions of the sense are related to the outer or transcendent intention of the reference (Ricoeur 1976:22).

- Every discourse can be investigated in terms of both its internal organisation – its sense – which makes it a message, which can be identified and reidentified, and its referential intention – its reference – which is its pretention to say something about something (Ricoeur 1976:66). Both the internal organisation of the relevant proverbs as well as their referential intention will come into consideration within this study.

- Sandoval (2006:6) points out three aspects of Ricoeur's work on metaphor that are suggestive for studying the discourse in Proverbs:
  1) Ricoeur offers a helpful model of how metaphors work.
  2) He suggests that a literary text opens up a view of a possible world that eclipses the tangible, objective world – a view that can be said to correspond to the patterns of value and meaning that might be discerned in a particular discourse.

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3) He indicates how a text, which may not initially appear metaphorical, might reveal certain aspects of metaphoricity.

This will be utilised with specific reference to the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 10:1–15:33.

Proverbs: Prose or poetry

- It is necessary to consider the genre of Proverbs, because as Alter (1985:4) observes, it is important to get some handle on the linguistic system being used in a text in order to understand what kinds of meaning – what representations of human and divine reality – are made possible by the particular rhetorical vehicle.

- After the longstanding prevalence of parallelism as the single distinguishing characteristic of Hebrew poetry was questioned, a lack of scholarly consensus over the distinction between prose and poetry in the Bible prevailed.

- The premise of this study is that Proverbs, and in particular the proverbs relevant to this study, may best be read as poetry. This premise is grounded in five suppositions:

  1) The dividing line between prose and poetry is not so clear cut, but this does not mean that there is no differentiation between the two (Burden 1986:57; Petersen & Richards 1992:13–14).

  2) Parallelism in prose, as in poetry, is the sign of the poetic function (Landy 1984:78, also Berlin [1985] 1992:9) within Biblical texts.

  3) Proverbs stresses the presupposition that wisdom is a language craft (Alter 1985:168): it uses the resources of poetic expression to achieve a fuller apprehension of its subject (Alter 1985:183).

  4) Poetry is a special way of imagining the world (Alter 1985:205) which Proverbs use to reference the symbolic world that the wisdom scribes envision for their readers through the text.

  5) The connection between metaphoric play and poetry provides an important key to understanding Proverbs as poetry (cf. Williams [1987] 1990:275).

- Several limiting factors about Biblical poetry need to be kept in mind.

- Research, since the late seventies, confirms that the nature of Hebrew poetry can only be unlocked with a comprehensive approach (Human 1999:359).

Methodology

- The approach of this study is a literary approach and as this study wants to come to an understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord within Proverbs 10:1–15:33 for modern-day readers, a reader-oriented method of Biblical analysis will be followed. The aim is to accomplish a reading of the proverbs, in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord, that will be relevant to the contemporary reader of the text.

- Toward this aim, this study will investigate the poetics of the relevant proverbs in the book of Proverbs. As such, this study is interested in the text in its present shape in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (cf. Sandoval 2007:457–459; Human 1999:362) and will take a synchronic approach, not giving attention to diachronic considerations.

- The central concern of this study is not with the text *per se* but with an understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord that the text communicates to the reader (cf. Frydrych 2002:6). The main tradition followed will be that of 𝔐 but not to the extent of ignoring the nature of the formation and transmission of ancient texts (cf. Frydrych 2002:6). For the purposes of this study, the text of *BHS* will be sufficient.

- In the translation strategy, the "grammatical principle" (MacArthur 2005) will be helpful in illuminating the meaning of a text. A more literal style of translating the proverbs will be followed, even to the point of awkwardness (cf. Alter 1985:32).

- The presupposition of this study is that ambiguity or double meanings in interpretation need not be avoided, but may even contribute to understanding the symbolic richness of the text.

- A more literal translation of the proverbs does not imply a literal interpretation of the text and this study will undertake a reading attentive of the symbolic aspects of the relevant proverbs in the text of Proverbs (cf. Sandoval 2006:67).

- A consideration of the different contexts of the proverbs may also be helpful in discerning the workings and meanings of the proverbs:
  1) The performance context is largely lost in the case of Proverbs but can still be inferred from the content of the proverb (Sandoval 2006:14).
  2) The historical context of the time of its composition from which Proverbs draw on illustrations to convey principles and truths.
  3) The setting of the book as a whole within the rest of the canon.
  4) The immediate literary context of individual proverbs.

  With regard to the literary context, the premise of this study is that the primary source of meaning is the individual proverb; the nature of which is to be self-contained and thus understood independently (Frydrych 2002:8, Clifford 1999:108; also cf. Heim 2001:18). This is not to deny that the literary context may add certain additional nuances to the interpretation of an individual proverb nor that the whole of Proverbs is most definitely more than the sum of its parts (Frydrych 2002:8; Gottwald [1985] 1987:564).

Procedure

- The goal of this study is twofold.
  1) To bring together hermeneutics and wisdom literature by testing a reading strategy that can do justice to Scriptural authority, yet also board the anti-authoritative sentiments of postmodern thought.
  2) In the process of testing this reading strategy on Proverbs 10:1-15:33 with specific reference to the fear of Yahweh, a possible understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord for contemporary readers will be inferred.
- In order to achieve these aims the following procedure will be followed:
  Chapter 3 will identify and explore the relevant proverbs in terms of explanation, or the 'what is said', according to Ricoeur.
  Chapter 4 will focus on understanding and explore the referential intention of those proverbs identified in chapter 3, or the 'about what it is said', according to Ricoeur.
  Chapter 5 will explore the appropriation of the text by the reader and formulated a possible understanding of the fear of the Lord for a contemporary reader of Proverbs 10:1–15:33.

Chapter 6 will give an overview of this study and state the thesis and concluding remarks.

- The procedure thus follows an inductive reasoning methodology. In the context of this study inductive reasoning consists of inferring general principles about the fear of the Lord from specific instances, namely the proverbs in 10:1–15:33 that deal with the fear of the Lord.

- The hope is to come to an understanding, that moves beyond foundations, beyond totalities and toward the Other, of the symbolic world with specific reference to the fear of the Lord that Proverbs 10:1–15:33 constructs for its readers and what it might mean for a contemporary reader.

Chapter 3: Identification and exploration of the relevant proverbs

3.1   Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to explore the relevant proverbs that make reference to the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 10:1–15:33, in terms of their poetic expression. The investigation into the functioning of "poetic discourse" (Ricoeur 1977:22) and the second pole of Ricoeur's hermeneutical considerations, namely objectification, will operate as guidelines for this chapter.

Thus, this chapter will concentrate on explanation, or the 'what is said' according to Ricoeur. In terms of Ricoeur's distinction between explanation and understanding it is necessarily the first stage of a hermeneutical enquiry. By performing an examination of the lexical, syntactic, grammatical and formal elements as well as the internal organisation of the relevant proverbs the "meaning as sense" (Ricoeur 1976:19–20) may be distinguished. Sandoval (2006:22) points out that this may be helpful in "discerning how a text constructs patterns of value." Scott ([1989] 1990:49) accentuates that careful consideration must be given to the literal level, for it is the vehicle for the nonliteral level, the tenor.

Objectification implies the mode of discourse of the text as a means of production (Reese [1979] 1990:385-386). The message of the text cannot be severed from its vehicle and consequently it is imperative to be conscious of the linguistic system of a text in order to grasp the kinds of meaning and representations of reality that are made possible by that particular rhetorical vehicle (Alter 1985:4; Berlin [1985] 1992:17). Reese ([1979] 1990:391) notes that the crafting or construction of a Biblical text as a work of art is an "urgent invitation to a profound life of faith" and the discourse calls for response. Toward the aim of understanding the response called for by the text, this chapter will investigate the poetics of the relevant proverbs

In this way the content of chapter 3 will serve as the raw material from which the symbolic world, with specific reference to the fear of the Lord that Proverbs 10:1–15:33 references (cf. Ricoeur 1976:21–22) may be considered in chapter 4, in order to bring it into connection with the world of the contemporary reader in chapter 5.

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Firstly, it is necessary to shortly reiterate the methodological considerations for this chapter. Thereafter the consequences of reading the relevant proverbs as poetry will be explored, where after a short exposition on proverb poetics will be made before the relevant proverbs will be identified and explored.

A literary approach with a reader oriented method of Biblical interpretation will be taken, as this study explores a possible understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord, within Proverbs 10:1–15:33, for contemporary readers. As such this study is interested in the text in its present shape in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (cf. Sandoval 2007:457–459; Human 1999:362) and will take a synchronic approach, not giving attention to diachronic considerations.

In the translation strategy, the "grammatical principle" (MacArthur 2005) will be helpful in illuminating the meaning of the relevant proverbs. A more literal style of translation will be followed, even to the point of awkwardness (cf. Alter 1985:32). A literal translation of the proverbs does not imply a literal interpretation of the text and this study will undertake a reading attentive of the symbolic aspects of the relevant proverbs in the text of Proverbs (cf. Sandoval 2006:67). The presupposition of this study is that ambiguity or double meanings in interpretation need not be avoided, but may even contribute to understanding the symbolic richness of the text.

Attention to the performance, historical, canonical and literary context of the proverbs will be helpful in discerning the workings and meanings of the proverbs. With regard to the literary context, the premise of this study is that the primary source of meaning is the individual proverb; the nature of which is to be self-contained and thus understood independently (Frydrych 2002:8, Clifford 1999:108; also cf. Heim 2001:18), neither denying that the immediate or broader literary context may add certain additional nuances to the interpretation of an individual proverb, nor that the whole of Proverbs is most definitely more than the sum of its parts (Frydrych 2002:8; Gottwald [1985] 1987:564).

With this aim of and methodology for this chapter asserted, it is now possible to turn to an exploration of the significance of reading Proverbs as poetry as well as a short

exposition on proverb poetics and thereafter to the task of first identifying the relevant proverbs in chapter 10:1–15:33 of the book of Proverbs and thereafter exploring them.

3.2   The significance of reading Proverbs as poetry

In chapter 2, the question as to reading Proverbs as prose or poetry was under consideration. Now an application of the inferences of that consideration is required. Firstly, a reiteration of the presupposition will be made followed by applications of the five subsequent suppositions. During the exploration of each of the relevant proverbs, these five suppositions will be tested.

Ricoeur (1977:15), in his hermeneutical efforts, cautioned against the detachment of the form and content of a discourse. It became apparent that the form in which a message is encoded and the content that the form communicates is inextricably bound together. McKane ([1979] 1990:167) states that 'what is said' cannot be separated from 'how it is said'; the force of speech and writing arises out of a marriage of form and content, and a divorce destroys the literary creation.

This is so much so that the form can be regarded as a means by which the writer uses the resources of literary expression available to capture a fuller understanding of the subject (Alter 1985:183–184; Burden 1986:40; Potgieter 2002:1372). The dynamics of the modes of discourse (literary genres) are employed by the author as the "means of production" (Ricoeur in Reese [1979] 1990:385). It is important to appreciate the linguistic system being used in a text, in order to comprehend what kinds of meaning, what representations of human and divine reality are made possible by the particular rhetorical vehicle (Alter 1985:4; Berlin [1985] 1992:17). Thus, the form of a text becomes an important key to the interpretation of the text (Burden 1986:40; Loader 1986:112; Human 1999:357).

It was concluded in chapter 2, that this study has the presupposition that Proverbs, and in this instance the proverbs relevant to this study, will be read as poetry. From this follows five suppositions that will now be explored in terms of the proverbs relevant to this study.

3.2.1 Parallelism as constructive device

Though with Landy (1984:68) and Kugel (1981), this study questions an absolute dividing line between prose and poetry in the Bible, nonetheless it agrees with Alter (1985:163) that the poetic character of the text, in purely formal terms, is nowhere more evident than in the book of Proverbs. Berlin's ([1985] 1992:16) observation that poetry uses parallelism as its constitutive or constructive device as well as Fox's (2004:165) that parallelism is clearly crucial to the workings of the aphorisms in Proverbs, is very relevant and applicable for this study of Proverbs.

Alter (1985:163) notes that most proverbs in chapter 10 and onward of Proverbs take up one poetic line and that the boundaries of the line are clearly marked by symmetries of meaning, syntax, and rhythm. Proverbs 10:27 will serve as an illustration:

יִרְאַת יְהוָה תּוֹסִיף יָמִים וּשְׁנוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּקְצֹרְנָה׃

The fear of Yahweh will cause to increase days
but the years of the wicked will be shortened.

The proverb consists of antithetic parallelism contrasting the fear of Yahweh with the wicked and an increase of days with the years that will be shortened. Each colon ends with the consequences of the choice being made and the severity of the consequences of a choice for wickedness is underlined by the contrast of the increase of days with the years being shortened. In this way the proverb is constructed using antithetic parallelism and the consequences of the two options are neatly spelled out and contrasted with each other.

Another example from Proverbs 15:16 will illustrate this supposition. In the so-called "better-than" (contrastive) proverbs, inversion and even subversion are created through binary opposition (Nel 2002:444):

טוֹב־מְעַט בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה מֵאוֹצָר רָב וּמְהוּמָה בוֹ׃

Better a little in the fear of Yahweh
than a great storehouse and panic in it.

One more illustration can be cited through Proverbs 14:27

יִרְאַת יְהוָה מְקוֹר חַיִּים לָסוּר מִמֹּקְשֵׁי מָוֶת׃

The fear of Yahweh the source of life
to keep far from the snares of death.

Parallelism structures the text by simultaneously setting up a relationship of equivalence between fear of Yahweh and the purpose of keeping away from the snares of death, as well as a relationship of opposition between the source of life and snares of death.

3.2.2 The sign of the poetic function

Parallelism is, in Biblical poetry, the sign of the poetic function (Landy 1984:78; Berlin [1985] 1992:9), which is "the set (*Einstellung*) towards the message as such, focus on the message for its own sake" (Jacobson in Berlin [1985] 1992:9; Ricoeur 1976:36).

This principle is worded from a different angle by Burke. For Burke (1969:50) "the notion of persuasion to attitude would permit the application of rhetorical terms to purely poetic structures; the study of lyrical devices might be classed under the head of rhetoric, when these devices are considered for their power to induce or communicate states of mind to readers." Thus, by the use of the poetic device of parallelism, attention is focused on the message for its own sake.

Clifford (2009:247) notes that the "two lines of Hebrew rhetoric, synthetic or antithetic, extend the thought and add drama. They invite the reader to read both lines and take the additional step of relating one line to the other." It is this focus on the message as such by the use of parallelism which is the sign of the poetic function that marks out proverbs as poetry.

As an example Proverbs 14:26 may be sited:

בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה מִבְטַח־עֹז וּלְבָנָיו יִהְיֶה מַחְסֶה׃

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In the fear of Yahweh the trust of strength
and for his sons he will be a place of refuge.

The second colon is a continuation and completion of the thought in the first that carries the thought forward. Both halves of the proverb focus on the message that the proverb wants to convey by making use of (progressive/climactic) parallelism.

3.2.3 Poetry: A text convention

Poetry is a text convention according to which poets organise their texts (Burden 1986:68). Alter (1985:168) states that "[a]s an expression of mainline Wisdom activity Proverbs stresses the presupposition that wisdom is a language craft." Proverbs utilise the resources of poetic expression to achieve a fuller apprehension of its subject (Alter 1985:183).

The smoothness of the parallelistic lines, is according to Alter (1985:164), not at all surprising as the proverbs are devised to transmit, by their unperturbed flow in language, the wisdom of the sages that "derives from a sense of balanced order, confident distinction, assured consequence for specific acts and moral stances." In Proverbs 14:2 the confident distinction and assured consequence for specific acts and moral stances is efficiently expressed by the crafty construction of the proverb:

הוֹלֵךְ בְּיָשְׁרוֹ יְרֵא יְהוָה וּנְלוֹז דְּרָכָיו בּוֹזֵהוּ׃

Walker in his straightness fearer of Yahweh
but goer on his wrong ways despiser of him.

Landy (1984:78) notices that parallelism in prose often marks the intrusion of the divine into the storyline. In this way, the author of a Biblical text uses the resources of poetic expression to mark a significant occurrence in the text. In Proverbs, Clifford (2004:157) notes the use of poetic expression in the poetics or working of the proverbs: the differentness or otherness of a proverb from ordinary speech "makes it appear 'given', 'revealed', 'always there' and so captures our respect and attention." So, the resources of poetic expression in Proverbs may also mark the convergence

of the divine and human reality through the impression of their revealedness that the proverbs convey. See as an example Proverbs 15:33:

יִרְאַת יְהוָה מוּסַר חָכְמָה וְלִפְנֵי כָבוֹד עֲנָוָה׃

The fear of Yahweh the instruction of wisdom
and before honour humility.

The proverb seems to be simply stating a revealed truth*.*

On a slightly different, but related level, Alter (1985:164) sees meaning arising from the complicated interaction between the two halves of the line that are shrewdly joined together. This is most obvious in Fox's (2004) explanation of the rhetoric of disjointed proverbs that craftily utilise the wording of one half of the line to say something (complementing or elaborating) on the other half (cf. Fox 2009:494–498). A good example of this may be found in Proverbs 15:16:

טוֹב־מְעַט בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה מֵאוֹצָר רָב וּמְהוּמָה בוֹ׃

Better a little in the fear of Yahweh
than a great storehouse and panic in it.

On the surface, the two halves of the proverb do not match, but upon a closer reading and some pondering, the interaction between the two halves of the proverb discloses the connection between the two lines (see 3.5.5 below).

3.2.4 A special way of imagining the world

Alter (1985:205) observes that poetry is a special way of imagining the world. Texts with a wisdom perspective, and it is especially evident in Proverbs, use this special way of imagining the world to reference the symbolic world that the wisdom scribes envision for their readers through the text. Figures of speech and poetic devices such as metaphor, antithetic parallelism and chiasm are used to underline the wisdom understanding of reality (cf. Loader 1986:107–110).

This becomes most evident when the corollary of antithetic parallelism is considered. It is commonly observed that antithetic parallelism dominates Proverbs 10:1–15:33

to a large extent (Treier 2011:61; Ross 2008; Clements 2003:446; Stek 2001:369; Perdue 2000:159). Composing a proverb with an antithetical structure, and combining such a large number of antithetical proverbs into one collection, underlines the world view of the sages that are, through the proverbs, being referenced for the reader.

For the sages, the world of humans is divided into two parts that are antithetically opposed to each other: the righteous-wise versus the wicked-fools. This bipolarity lies at the heart of the proverbial perspective that is not just a convenient and simple way of describing the human society but reflects the sages belief that, by divine design, it is engraved deep into the fabric of the entire world (Frydrych 2002:32). Proverbs 14:2 is an excellent working example:

הוֹלֵךְ בְּיָשְׁרוֹ יְרֵא יְהוָה וּנְלוֹז דְּרָכָיו בּוֹזֵהוּ׃

Walker in his straightness fearer of Yahweh
but goer on his wrong ways despiser of him.

In the proverb the bipolar structure of reality is revealed: the fearer of Yahweh that walks in straightness stands antithetically opposed to and is contrasted with a despiser of him that goes on wrong ways.

3.2.5 Metaphoric play

The connection between metaphoric play and poetry provides an important key to reading Proverbs as poetry. Ricoeur (1976:46) quotes Beardsley's observation that metaphor is a poem in miniature. According to Williams ([1987] 1990:275) "[m]etaphoric play is the most important element of wisdom poetics." Proverbs employ it to imagine or picture for the reader a symbolic reality. A metaphor is an inherently playful and imaginative way of making sense of reality and it works because of the similarity as well as the dissimilarity of the vehicle and tenor (Melchert 1998:71–72).

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Proverbs 14:27 exploit metaphoric play in order to say something about the nonliteral tenor, or to achieve the second order reference that Ricoeur (1975:84; cf. 1976:56–57) understands Biblical text to be referencing:

יִרְאַת יְהוָה מְקוֹר חַיִּים לָסוּר מִמֹּקְשֵׁי מָוֶת׃

The fear of Yahweh the source of life
to keep far from the snares of death.

A source or fountain was a well known entity in the Biblical world and was depended upon as a source of life (see 3.5.4 below). So, the fear of the Lord is a source of life.

In what way is the fear of Yahweh similar as well as dissimilar to a source and in what way is it considered to be a source of life? The text places considerable trust in the readers, for it is their responsibility to fill the gaps that a metaphor necessarily leaves, but if the metaphor is made too clear and the ambiguity settled for clarity and precision the metaphoric play is blocked and the metaphor destroyed (Melchert 1998:71–72; cf. Ricoeur 1976:52).

3.3   Proverb poetics

Clifford (2004) describes how a proverb manages to arrest a reader's attention or, in his words, to "assert its authority". He perceives that the brief sayings of Proverbs 10–31 have to engage the reader immediately or run the risk of not being able to assert its authority and communicate successfully. Toward this aim, the sayings must resonate somehow in the experience of readers. He argues that the mediation of wisdom takes place when style and content combine to give the impression that the aphorism is 'given'.

Clifford (2004:156) notices that a saying, by its very nature, is designed to affect the reader quickly. It does this by using formal as well as semantic features. These, combined with the content or idea of the proverb, attract the interest of the reader to establish a connection with the reader, or in terms of this study, to fuse the world of the text with the world of the reader (Ricoeur in Wallace 2000:305).

Clifford (2004:156) describes the first principle that makes a quick connection possible, namely the principle of analogy. This is related to the content or idea of the proverb. Analogy presupposes a unity amid the variety of the world that presents itself to a person. Things are connected so that something said of one thing can apply to something quite different. Events in or aspects of one sphere of life not only relate to those in another, they may also illuminate them and indeed does this in the case of the proverbs.

The content or idea of a proverb combines with the formal features thereof in order to establish itself as authorative. He stresses that one cannot separate form and content, but that the formal elements of a proverb present it selves more immediately to the hearer. He suggest that the "conciseness and euphony of a saying mark it immediately as different from ordinary speech, which is usually diffuse, repetitive, and meandering. The 'differentness' from ordinary speech, the otherness of a proverb, makes it appear 'given', 'revealed', 'always there' and so captures our respect and attention" (Clifford 2004:157). In this way, the reader becomes involved in the meaning of the proverb and the saying becomes assertive.

Parsons (1993:166–167) notes Long's suggestion that the rhetorical effect of a proverb is to propel the reader both backward and forward. The proverb summons the reader to imagine the kind of experiences that affected the development of the proverb, in this way making a backward reference. At the same time it pushes the reader forward by implying future incidents in which it will apply. In this way, it activates the imagination to ponder other situations in which the wisdom of the proverb may apply.

With this short exposition on proverb poetics, it is now possible to turn to the task of first identifying and thereafter exploring the relevant proverbs in chapter 10:1–15:33 of the book of Proverbs.

3.4   Identifying the relevant proverbs

The relevant proverbs were identified with an electronic word search within Proverbs 10:1–15:33 for ירא יהוה. The search yielded the following results:

1 - Proverbs 10:27 → יִרְאַת יְהוָה

2 - Proverbs 14:2 → יְרֵא יְהוָה

3 - Proverbs 14:26 → בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה

4 - Proverbs 14:27 → יִרְאַת יְהוָה

5 - Proverbs 15:16 → בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה

6 - Proverbs 15:33 → יִרְאַת יְהוָה

3.5   Exploring the relevant proverbs

3.5.1 Proverbs 10:27

יִרְאַת יְהוָה תּוֹסִיף יָמִים וּשְׁנוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּקְצֹרְנָה:

The fear of Yahweh will cause to increase days
but the years of the wicked will be shortened.

Scott (1965:82) translates יִרְאַת יְהוָה with 'reverence of the Lord', while Clifford (1999:110) translates it as 'revering Yahweh'. When interpreting the fear of Yahweh, translators often substitute fear for reverence. This study chooses a more literal translation with a metaphorical reading. יִרְאַת יְהוָה is translated throughout this study with the fear of Yahweh which has a broader metaphorical association than reverence. A genitive construction normally signifies possession, the first word indicating that the second belongs to the first (for instance דְּבַר יְהוָה "the word of the Lord"). The fear of the Lord, however, does not signify that fear belongs to the Lord, rather the whole construction signifies fear of a person for Yahweh, thus a disposition of a person. Thus, the fear of the Lord is a demeanour toward God. Hildebrandt (2010:1) notes the construction to be an objective genitive.

תּוֹסִיף is in the hiph'il stem formation, the use of which is normally to indicate a

causative (Putnam [1996] 2002:27). The proverb seems to say that the cause of an increase of days is the fear of the Lord. The action is conveyed in the imperfect of the verb, creating a sense of future expectation. Thus, using rhetoric of the desirable, the proverb wants to persuade the reader of the positive worth of the fear of the Lord in order for him/her to choose the fear of the Lord above the alternative, which is wickedness.

Several commentators understand 'life' in Proverbs to mean not necessarily quantitative, as in a long life, but also qualitative, as in the good life (see for example Proverbs 3:2 where quantity and quality are combined) (cf. Murphy 1998:76; Engelbrecht 1978:6; Heim 2001:131). This notion is enhanced by the translation possibility of תוֹסִיף which can be translated both in the sense of enhance and increase (Holladay 1988:137). The more probable reading in the light of the second part of the proverb's 'be shortened' is increase as in quantitative, but the richness of language use in the proverbs should not be let out of sight.

It is possible that the proverb is tapping into the very familiar Scriptural promise of a long life (i.a. Deuteronomy 6:2). Verse 30 which is often grouped together with verse 27 (Heim 2001:131; Garrett 1993:122; Ironside 2006:74; Murphy 1998:255; Engelbrecht 1978:6) deals with dwelling/inhabiting the land and draw on Torah language, according to Bullock (2009:13), to establish the relationship between the teaching of Proverbs and Torah.

Though, even if it is not necessarily possible to discern the intention of the author and/or redactor of the proverb, at least a reader familiar with the rest of the Old Testament tradition may, in his or her reading of the proverb, see in it such a reference when the canonical context within which Proverbs is set is taken into account. Such a reference, places the seemingly secular proverbs within a covenant context, even though what can be called covenant concerns is not the main concern of the sages (cf. Clements 2003:437).

וְ and וֹ can be translated both as 'and' or 'but' and the context will help determine

which of the two. Clifford (1999:108) notes that chapters 10–15 "consist almost entirely of antithetic proverbs in which the second line (colon B) restates the first line (colon A) in an antithetical way." Treier (2011:61), Ross (2008), Clements (2003:446) and Perdue (2000:159) all note the prominence of antithesis between the righteous and the wicked with their respective behaviour, within the first section (10:1–15:33) of the collection (10:1–22:16). As this collection of proverbs within the book are largely dominated by antithetical sayings, the translation choice will frequently fall on 'but'. In this proverb 'the fear of the Lord', 'increase' and 'days' in colon A stand over and against 'years', 'the wicked' and 'shortened' in colon B, which emphasise the antithetical contrast. Clifford (1999:110) also notes the antithesis between the righteous (implied by the fear of Yahweh) and the wicked within this proverb.

According to Frydrych (2002:31), the main connotation of רָשָׁע (רְשָׁעִים plural) in Proverbs is that of evilness, but that it can be used in a legal context with a much narrower forensic sense as indicating guilt or being guilty. He brings to the fore that the lexemes used to define the polarity wise/fools can be divided broadly into two groups: 1) those with primary reference to ability or skill, such as חָכָם or כְּסִיל which are mainly used to describe human activity, and 2) those with mainly ethical connotations such as צַדִּיק and רָשָׁע which are largely used to describe the consequences of human behaviour (Frydrych 2002:25). Murphy (1998:76) translates רְשָׁעִים with 'wicked', because according to him the contrast between the just and the wicked gives a strong moral tone to the word. Holladay (1988:347) notes the translation possibilities of רָשָׁע as 1) guilty (in a single instance), in the wrong; 2) guilty (in genl, especially before God), transgressor; 3) impious. Swanson (1997) notes the translation possibilities as adjective 1) wicked, unrighteous, that is, pertaining to being evil, with a focus on the guilt of violating a standard 2) guilty, that is, pertaining to being legally not innocent of a violation of law or noun 1) the wicked, the unrighteous, that is, a class of persons who are evil, with a focus on the guilt of violating a standard; 2) the guilty, that is, a class of persons who are legally not innocent of a violation of law. In conclusion 'wicked' seems to be the best translation for רְשָׁעִים, but the broader semantic domain network within which it stands must be kept in mind.

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תִּקְצֹֽרְנָה, Holladay (1988:322) notes two meanings for the root קצר I) reap the harvest and II) be shortened. It is possible that, although be shortened is the more probable reading seeing as it is contrasted with a prolonging of life, the proverb plays on both these meanings as a metaphorical understanding of reaping a harvest is to bear consequences (e.g. Hosea 8:7) and thus the wicked will bear the consequences of their wickedness which is that their years will be shortened. Engelbrecht (1978:6) brings the prolonging of life into connection with wages and both Murphy (1998:255) and Dell (2006:21) notes that the fear of the Lord are often associated with retribution in Proverbs.

Fox (2009:527) indicates that there are two ways of conceiving of a lifespan. The one being that of a normal lifespan (of about 70 years according to Psalms 90:10) lived to the full, the person dying in his time, or of someone dying a premature death, before the normal lifespan is fulfilled, the person dying 'not in his time'. The other is what is intended in the proverb, that of a lifespan, as a certain amount of years, being allotted to someone at a certain point in time which can be increased or decreased by the persons behaviour (as the case of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:6). The 'increase of days' versus 'shortening of years', underscores the severity of the consequences for the wicked.

Clifford (1999:110) draws attention to the active verb in colon A, תּוֹסִיף, balanced by the passive in colon B, תִּקְצֹֽרְנָה, which he understands to imply a divine passive which is an indirect way of expressing divine activity (cf. Longman 2006:242). This is very probable as colon A already made reference to the Lord.

Farmer (1991:79) notes that Proverbs often speak of life and death in a roundabout rather than direct way, thus 'the years of the wicked are shortened' is a metaphorical way of saying that wickedness leads to death, whereas the fear of the Lord leads to life. Thus, negatively the fear of the Lord averts a shortening of years and positively it opens up the prospect of life both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The antithetic structure "enabled the motivational potency of the sentences to be doubled. That is the antithetic structure enabled the sage to *two* reasons for engaging in appropriate behavior, one positive and one negative" (Bland 2002:111).

Various scholars group verses 27–30 together (Heim 2001:131; Garrett 1993:122; Ironside 2006:74), while others group verses 27–32 into a unit (Murphy 1998:76; Engelbrecht 1978:6). All agree on the prominence of the contrast between the just and the wicked. Whatever grouping one chooses, the subject matter of the unit deals with the theme of long life for the righteous and destruction for the wicked as Garrett (1993:122) points out, or the lot of the righteous and the wicked as Engelbrecht (1978:6) points out.

The poetics of this proverb can be described as follows: The prospect or future expectancy of life or of death, both expressed by the imperfect verb, is used within a rhetoric of the desirable (a lengthening of days) and a rhetoric of the undesirable (the shortening of years) respectively, combined with cause and effect- /act-consequence rhetoric (bringing into play thoughts of divine activity) as a motivation to persuade the reader of the value of the fear of the Lord (cf. Sandoval 2006:174–180).

Testing the five suppositions for reading Proverbs 10:27 as poetry: The proverb uses antithetic parallelism as its constructive device with the fear of Yahweh and an increase of days contrasted with the wicked and the shortening of years. This is crucial to the workings of this proverb as it focuses the attention on the message of the proverb. The proverb utilises the twofold structure of the antithetic poetic expression as a resource to simultaneously encourage toward the fear of Yahweh, through a rhetoric of the desirable (lengthening of days) and discourage from wickedness through a rhetoric of the undesirable (shortening of years). Through the antithetic structure of the proverb the symbolic world that the proverb reference is imagined and laid bare as being bifurcated between those who fear Yahweh and those who are wicked. The proverb plays metaphorically on the patriarchal covenant tradition with its promise of long life.

3.5.2 Proverbs 14:2

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הוֹלֵךְ בְּיָשְׁרוֹ יְרֵא יְהוָה וּנְלוֹז דְּרָכָיו בּוֹזֵהוּ׃

Walker in his straightness fearer of Yahweh
but goer on his wrong ways despiser of him.

The text critical note in BHS that most Medieval Hebrew manuscripts read בְּיֹשֶׁר (in straightness/uprightness/honesty) does not make a big interpretive difference in the understanding of this proverb.

It is difficult to determine the subject and the predicate of either of the colons (Fox 2009:572). Different Bible translations choose differently, for example the English Standard Version translates: "Whoever walks in uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is devious in his ways despises him", while the New International Version translates: "Whoever fears the LORD walks uprightly, but those who despise him are devious in their ways." Fox (2009:572–573) states that "[w]hile it can be taken for granted that the God fearer is honest in behaviour, it is not self-evident that the honest man fears God or that the dishonest one holds him in contempt. The dishonest man, whatever his outward piety, actually despises God", and thus sees in the proverb an observation that a person's behaviour is indicative of true piety or blasphemy and not the other way around. Murphy, however, notes Haussmann's observation that the subject and predicate permeate each other. For Hausmann (in Murphy1998:103) "fear of the Lord is the basis for upright conduct, and from such conduct one can conclude to fear the Lord." It seems that the proverb intentionally leaves the identification of the subject and predicate undetermined, in order to highlight the congruency between the external manifestation in behaviour and an inner attitude of fear or despising the Lord.

Walking in straightness or on wrong ways should be read metaphorically to indicate ethical conduct (Fox 2000:128–131; Perdue 2000:xci; cf. Hubbard 2004). The proverb relates ethical conduct to wisdom by way of fear of the Lord (Murphy 1998:103; Longman 2006:297). Bearing this in mind it should be noted that what is aimed at in the proverb is not an abstraction, but the specific realisation of it in a person's actions indicated by the possessive pronoun in 'his straightness' and 'his wrong ways' (Fox 2009:573). Longman (2006:293) is uncertain as to whether the

pronominal suffix on דְּרָכָיו (path) refers to God or the person who goes on the wrong path. In the light of the first colon, 'walker in his straightness' and the specificity of the action, the reference seems to be to the person who goes on his wrong paths.

The usual grammatical construction of the fear of Yahweh (יִרְאַת, the construct state of יִרְאָה combined with the proper name of יְהוָה) is here diverged from using a Qal participle translated as 'fearer of Yahweh'. It accentuates the close connection between an inner disposition that cannot be separated from and inevitably becomes manifest in outward behaviour as well as the converse, outward behaviour that reinforces and maintains an inner disposition. Thus, the proverb sketches the ethical component of the basic attitude of the fear of the Lord (Murphy 1998:108). Ross (2008), sees the practical implications of wisdom spelled out in the section, Proverbs14:1–32, that is the immediate literary context of the proverb and notes that the whole section "focuses on living in wisdom", which is a very practical theme.

The word בּוֹזֵה (despise) is used in the second colon to indicate the antithesis with the fear of the Lord that occur in the first colon. This word will again be used in the same way in 19:16 (cf. Engelbrecht 1978:8) in antithesis with 'keeping the commandment'. On both occasions בּוֹזֵה (despise) is combined with the metaphorical network of the way.

The teaching of the proverb is presented in the form of a wisdom sentence, on the surface describing the way the world is. Frydrych (2002:41) points out the distinction between wisdom sentence and instruction, but cautions against a too rigid division, especially when the function of a wisdom sentence or an instruction is considered. The aim or illocutionary force of "both are intended to make the addressee act, or not act, in a certain way" (Frydrych 2002:41).

Whybray ([1979] 1990:162) reads this verse together with 14:1 as "a theological interpretation of personified Wisdom which sees Wisdom as identical with Yahweh's wisdom, or with Yahweh himself, so bringing 'secular' wisdom under the umbrella of Yahwism … the fear of Yahweh, as it were, glosses the concept of personified Wisdom." He comments that on the pattern set in chapters 1–9 concerning the relationship of personified Wisdom and Yahweh "[o]ne may go as far as to say that

we should expect the only saying of this kind in chapters 10,1–22,16 to be glossed in this way by a Yahweh saying, and we are not disappointed (Whybray [1979] 1990:162).

In conclusion, the poetics of this proverb can be described as follows: The proverb exploits the indeterminacy of the subject and predicate in both colons to express the congruency between an internal disposition and external moral behaviour of a person. In this way, the proverb gives expression to the sages understanding of the interconnectedness of the internal and external realities of moral conduct and the motivation thereof, relating ethical conduct and wisdom. The antithetic structure enables the proverb to achieve two objectives simultaneously. Firstly, it divides the social reality into two spheres namely 1) the fearers of Yahweh who goes on straight ways and 2) despisers of him that goes on wrong ways. Berlin's ([1985] 1992:140) observation of the poetic function of parallelism is important here: "They organize, or reorganize, the world into equivalences and oppositions by their form of expression … This was, and still is, a most effective way to give heightened awareness of the message to its receivers." Secondly, this presents the reader with a choice either for the one or the other. The mention of 'walking' and 'way' plays on the metaphorical network of 'the way' often expressed in the doctrine of 'the two ways' (Sandoval 2006:131; Clifford 2009:247) that is rooted in the Jewish wisdom tradition (Perdue 2000:79; cf. Betz 2008:171) and is a ground metaphor of Proverbs 1–9 (Fox 2000:128). The metaphor of 'the way', describing behaviour as a path (Fox 2000:128), is not meant to be an abstraction, but is indicated with the third person masculine singular suffix making the intended application very practical and concrete in a person's behaviour.

Testing the five suppositions for reading Proverbs 14:2 as poetry: The constructive device of this proverb is antithetic parallelism. It contrasts both the internal disposition, fear of Yahweh and despise of him, as well as the external moral conduct, walking in straightness and going on wrong ways, that are portrayed as being congruent. This is the sign of the poetic function that focuses attention on the message of the proverb, namely the interconnectedness of the internal and external realities of a person. The confident distinction between the two co-referential pairs, walker in his straightness and fearer of Yahweh versus goer on his wring ways and

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despiser of him, is efficiently expressed by the crafty construction of the proverb in antithetic parallelism, confirming that the proverb is a poetic text convention. The antithetic structure of the proverb expresses the proverbs special way of imagining the human world as being divided between the righteous-wise and the wicked-fools. The proverb plays metaphorically on the metaphor of 'the way' that operates, in Proverbs, as a ground-metaphor for human behaviour (cf. Johnson 1998:175).

3.5.3 Proverbs 14:26

בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה מִבְטַח־עֹז וּלְבָנָיו יִהְיֶה מַחְסֶה׃

In the fear of Yahweh the trust of strength
and for his sons he will be a place of refuge.

מִבְטָח (the construct state מִבְטַח – trust of) indicates the person or thing in whom/which one can trust (Fox 2009:583; Holladay 1988:181). The text critical note in BHS does not make a big interpretive difference in the understanding of this proverb: The Peshitta reads *šjn*, perhaps which is to be read aloud עָז (power/strength).

A question to consider, in order to come to a clearer understanding of the proverb, is who is the 'he' that will be the son's refuge? The father who fears Yahweh or Yahweh? It is difficult to answer this question and the result is two possible readings. One possibility is to see the father as the refuge. Ross draws a parallel between the proverb and the Decalogue promise of showing love to a thousand generations of those who love the Lord and keep his commandments (Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10). "In God's economy the nature and actions of parents have an effect on children … and so the children reap the benefits" (Ross 2008). Hubbard (2004) understands Yahweh to make "those who fear him strong fortresses for their families." Murphy (1998:106) sees a connection with Proverbs 20:7b where the behaviour of the parents is also linked to the wellbeing of the children.

Another possibility is to see Yahweh as the refuge. In Proverbs18:10 the name of Yahweh is called a strong tower and a refuge of safety for the righteous (Engelbrecht 1978:8; cf. Whybray ([1979] 1990:161). Even as the father finds in the fear of

Yahweh a strong trust, so also the children will find/continue to find in Yahweh a place of refuge.

The imperfect verb יִהְיֶה (he will be) may indicate a future action/event (cf. Murphy 1998:101) or it may indicate a repeated action. In the case of the second possibility the translation would read: "[a]nd for his sons he continues to be a refuge", the implication being that the father found in the fear of Yahweh a strong trust and that the sons will continue to find refuge (in the father or in Yahweh depending on the interpretation possibility one chooses).

מַחְסֶה translates literally as 'a place of refuge'. It is a metaphor for safety (cf. Heim 2001:186). Longman (2006:305) notes Van Leeuwen's observation about the connection between the language of refuge and safety and the relationship with Yahweh found especially in the Psalter. It is not an uncommon Biblical metaphor. Combining the proposition בְּ (in) indicating location with מַחְסֶה (trust of) the proverb makes use metaphorically of the symbolic value of the spatial dimension of a place of safety. בָנָיו (sons), plural, already indicates a blessing; the father has more than one child (cf. Psalms 128:3–4).

To conclude, the poetics of this proverb can be described as follows: The proverb sketches the fear of Yahweh metaphorically as a place of refuge, utilising the symbolic value of the spatial dimension that is created by the combination of the proposition בְּ, indicating locality, with מַחְסֶה 'a place of refuge' as a metaphor for safety. It diverges from the expected pattern of antithesis and is grafted in a synonymous parallelism expressing the flow of the benefit of wisdom from one generation to the next as the proverb flows from colon A to colon B. The subject of the second colon remains uncertain as it could be the father or Yahweh. The benefit of wisdom does not come to the children without the father, but through the father that finds a strong confidence in Yahweh, making both the father and Yahweh the place of refuge for the next generation. The proverb both declare that in the fear of Yahweh one may find surety of strength, and invite the reader to place his/her trust in it to the benefit of self and one's progeny.

Testing the five suppositions for reading Proverbs 14:26 as poetry: The proverb is set in synonymous parallelism expressing the flow of the benefit of wisdom from one generation to the next as the proverb flows from colon A to colon B. Thus, it uses synonymous parallelism as its constructive device. This is also the sign of the poetic function as the flow of the parallelism focuses attention on the message of the proverb that is the flow of the benefit of the fear of Yahweh from one generation to the next. It is very evident that this proverb is a text convention that utilises the resources of poetic expression to achieve a fuller apprehension of its subject. It is also a special way of imagining a world in which Yahweh is the trust of strength for those who fear him. The proverb metaphorically exploits the symbolic value of a place of safety, in order to invite the reader to fear Yahweh and find safety.

3.5.4 Proverbs 14:27

יִרְאַת יְהוָה מְקוֹר חַיִּים לָסוּר מִמֹּקְשֵׁי מָוֶת׃

The fear of Yahweh the source of life
to keep far from the snares of death.

The first text critical note informs that the Septuagint here reads πρόσταγμα (order, command(ment), injunction) = תּוֹרַת, compare 13:14. The second note informs that the Peshitta Targum reads *l'jljn dstjn* = לָסֻר.

The fountain of life is a striking metaphor in this proverb. Fishbane (1992) describes the well of living water as a Biblical motif and quotes Shemaryahu Talmon on the matter of motif:

> A literary motif is a representative complex theme which recurs within the framework of the Old Testament in various forms and connections. It is rooted in an actual situation of anthropological or historical nature. In its secondary literary setting, the motif gives expression to ideas and experiences inherent in the original situation, and is employed to reactualize in the audience the reactions of the participants in the original situation. The motif … is not a mere reiteration of the sensations involved, but rather a heightened and intensified representation of them.

He focuses attention on the Biblical motif as a concrete fact and a religious metaphor (Fishbane 1992:4). The concrete nature of מָקוֹר (מְקוֹר construct state), spring, fountain, source (Holladay 1988:212) and other words in the same semantic domain were appreciated as a source of life and nourishment in the Ancient Near East (Fishbane 1992:4). "The primordial character of natural springs … from which water bursts forth from the depths of the earth, should not be forgotten" (Fishbane 1992:4). The metaphor finds its very strength in the tangibility of the vehicle (the source of life).

The infinitive construct (סוּר + לְ) indicates a purpose clause: 'for to keep far from'. This combined with the preposition מִן, that has the basic meaning out of or away from (Holladay 1988:200), in this case with a spatial dimension indicating direction of movement, thus translating literally 'for to keep far from away from'. The proverb communicates a very definite idea of movement away from the snares of death. The benefit of wisdom, again as in 14:26, is safety.

The source/fountain (singular) of life is antithetically posed against the snares (plural) of death to indicate that there is only one source of life, but many snares of death. Hildebrandt (1992:443) points out that the poetic structure of antithetic parallelism, so frequently used by the sages, unleashes a powerful motivation combination: approach + avoidance. That which is good is to be approached, while that which is not good is to be avoided.

Berlin ([1985] 1992:135) describes the effect of parallelism as setting up relationships of equivalence between two propositions. In the case of the proverb two relationships are established namely one of equivalence between the fear of Yahweh and the purpose of keeping away from, and one of opposition between the source of life and snares of death. In the case of this proverb, the relationship is established between the two colons, comprising a single proposition. She stresses that parallelism in itself does not have meaning but that it, "like other formal features in a text, *does* help to structure the text and thereby has an impact on how its meaning is arrived at" (Berlin [1985] 1992:135, author's italics). She concludes

"parallelism calls attention to itself and to the message which it bears. Parallelism embodies the poetic function, and the poetic function heightens the focus on the message" (Berlin [1985] 1992:140).

Murphy (1998:106) notices the almost identical wording of this proverb and 13:14, except that the teaching of the wise is now explicitly identified with the fear of the Lord indicating that it is not to be divorced from genuine wisdom.

It is not difficult to see why many scholars group verse 26 and 27 together, the theme of both being the fear of the Lord (Fox 2010:583; Murphy 1998:106; Garrett 1993:145). Heim (2001:184) also notes the fact that "both display synonymous-sequential parallelism, and the scarcity of synonymous parallelism in this collection suggest that whenever two of them stand together this may be intentional." Venter (1999:710) group 13:14–14:27 into a unit under the unifying theme of the benefit of wisdom.

In conclusion, the poetics of the proverb may be described in the following way: The proverb employs the literary motif of the source or fountain of life, grounded in the concrete situation of the Ancient Near East where the dryer climate augments water as a necessity for life. The source or fountain functioned within that society as a very well-known symbol of life and sustenance or nourishment. The motif of the source of life is a powerful metaphor for the fear of the Lord, precisely because of the tangibility of the symbol that effectively carries the force of the metaphor. Together with the metaphoric utilisation of the motif of the source of life the benefit of the fear of the Lord is effectively conveyed with the infinitive construction designating a purpose clause; the fear of the Lord is for keeping far from the snares of death. Parallelism structure the text, by simultaneously setting up a relationship of equivalence between fear of Yahweh and the purpose of keeping away from the snares of death, as well as a relationship of opposition between the source of life and snares of death.

Testing the five suppositions for reading Proverbs 14:27 as poetry: Parallelism as constructive device structures the text by simultaneously setting up a relationship of equivalence between the fear of Yahweh and the purpose of keeping away from the

snares of death as well as a relationship of opposition between the source of life and the snares of death. Parallelism is here the sign of the poetic function that focus attention on the message of the proverb which is an invitation to the fear of the Lord in order to keep safe from the snares of death. The relationships of equivalence and opposition are neatly encapsulated by the proverb showing that it is a text convention. Through the poetic expression of the proverb the symbolic-textual world is imagined as a place where the fear of Yahweh function very tangibly as both nourishment and safeguard for the life of the righteous-wise. Metaphoric play is most evident in the metaphoric use of the snares of death as a negative motivation of avoidance and the use of the motif of the source of life as a powerful positive metaphor for the fear of the Lord where the tangibility of the symbol effectively carries the force of the metaphor.

3.5.5 Proverbs 15:16

טֽוֹב־מְעַט בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה מֵאוֹצָר רָב וּמְהוּמָה בֽוֹ׃

Better a little in the fear of Yahweh
than a great storehouse and panic in it.

Fox (2009:595–598; cf. Murphy 1998:113) points out the close relationship between Proverbs 15:16–17 and the Instruction of Amenemope 9.5–8:
"(5) Better is poverty in the hand of the god,
(6) than wealth in the storehouse.
(7) Better are (mere) loaves of bread when the heart is pleasant,
(8) than wealth with vexation" (Fox 2009:596).
Ever since the translation and publication of it in1923 there has been great debate on the mutual influence of the Instruction of Amenemope and the book of Proverbs (Shupak 2005:203). Without going into the details of the debate, as it falls outside the scope of this study, it is possible to assert with Fox (2009:596–597) that together with verse 17 these proverbs have their closest parallels, not in other Hebrew proverbs but in the Instruction of Amenemope.

Fox (2004:169) describes 15:16 as a disjointed proverb. These are

> … proverbs in which the fit between the lines (cola) is awkward. This may sometimes be a flaw, but in quite a few cases it seems intended for a particular rhetorical effect. Imperfect parallelism leaves a gap between the lines. When the missing component – a premise or a conclusion – is mentally supplied, the couplet gains cohesiveness and a tighter linkage. Such 'disjointed' proverbs are a type of enthymeme which involves the audience in its own persuasion.

(Fox 2004:165)

His further observation is that this proverb is shaped to a "complex 'better than' template" (Fox 2009:596). The purpose of which is a negotiation of values through an assertion of relative value (Fox 2009:598). The present proverb does not commend poverty over wealth, that is not consistent with the broader view of Proverbs (cf. Fox 2009:597) that values wealth, especially as a motivational symbol (Sandoval 2006:57–61). Rather, it teaches the reader or hearer of the proverb to evaluate the values and experiences that are being encapsulated in the proverbs (Fox 2009:598).

In this way, the wisdom of the book of Proverbs is not merely assertive, but is by nature analytical (Perry in Fox 2009:597–598). As Fox (2004:176) states it: "If read carefully, then, the disjointed proverbs not only transmit packets of truths, they also *train* the reader in a mode of thinking: identifying behaviors and associating them with their consequences. In other words, they train the reader to think like a sage." The scenario's in full, according to Perry (in Fox 2009:598), of which two are omitted in this Proverb is (marked from best to worse with positive and negative values according to the speaker's implied value system):

"1. (A') a great storehouse and (B) fear of the Lord (+/+)

2. (A') a great storehouse and (B') turmoil (+/-)

3. (A) sparse food and (B) fear of the Lord (-/+)

4. (A) sparse food and (B') turmoil (-/-)"

Whybray ([1979] 1990:161) notices that 15:16 is clearly a reinterpretation of 15:17, elevating the thought of verse 17 to a religious plane. The close relation between the two verses is for him evident not only from the contents, but also from the

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parallelism of their form. Treier (2011:89) as well as Clements (2003:451) notes in connection with this proverb, the underlying perspective of Proverbs concerning ultimate profit. Fox (2009:595) also notes the evaluative aspect of the proverb that evaluates the worth of fear of Yahweh above wealth.

Poetics: This proverb utilises a rhetorical device that by the mismatching of the parallel lines enriches the message of the saying beyond the sum of its parts (Fox 2004:166). Two contrasts are being set up in this antithetic proverb. Firstly, the little is contrasted with a great storehouse. Secondly, the fear of Yahweh is contrasted with panic. Starting with the second contrast, the thought being that the storehouse is the cause of the panic (Fox (2009:595) translates turmoil in the sense of agitation and conflict as when brothers strife over an inheritance. By implication a little in the fear of the Lord comes with peace, whereas panic or turmoil accompanies abundant provisions that were gained with a lack of the fear of the Lord. When the fear of the Lord is set in antithesis with panic, in this proverb, they are shown to be opposites (Fox 2009:595). Fear and panic usually go together, but the fear of the Lord is here revealed as something opposite to panic. A great storehouse promises peace of mind but may actually bring panic whereas fear, when it is the fear of Yahweh, does not lead to panic but to the opposite, which is implied; peace. The proverb teaches the worth of the fear of the Lord which is far more prized than something everyone desires, namely a great storehouse, even when it is paired with something less desirable namely scarce provisions (cf. Fox 2009:597). Additionally, as Fox (2009:595) points out, the proverb teaches that turmoil is calamitous and arises for lack of the fear of God. To sum up: "Material wealth is good, but other things are more important. Piety compensates for its lack, and turmoil cancels its value" (Fox 2009:595).

Testing the five suppositions for reading Proverbs 15:16 as poetry: Antithetic parallelism functions as constructive device for this "better-than" or contrastive proverb. Inversion and even subversion are created through the contrasting of a little in the fear of Yahweh with the great storehouse and panic in it. The antithetic parallelism also creates the inversion that is the message of the proverb and thus is the sign of the poetic function that focus the attention of the reader on the message for its own sake. This proverb utilises a rhetorical device that, by the mismatching of

the parallel lines, enriches the message of the saying beyond the sum of its parts. The meaning of the proverb arises from the complicated interaction between the two halves of the line that are shrewdly joined together and this shows the proverb to be a text convention that craftily utilise the wording of one half of the line to elaborate on the other half of the line. The proverb is a special way of imagining the symbolic-textual world in which, contrary to the tendency in physical reality, the relative value of spiritual resources is affirmed over material goods. The metaphoric play is primarily on the level of the sentence and directs the reader toward the symbolic-textual world that the text references for the reader.

3.5.6 Proverbs 15:33

יִרְאַת יְהוָה מוּסַר חָכְמָה וְלִפְנֵי כָבוֹד עֲנָוָה:

The fear of Yahweh, the instruction of wisdom
and before honour, humility.

Clements (2003:450), Dell (2006:111) and Ross (2008) all note the numerous references to Yahweh in chapter 15, which continue into chapter 16. Fox (2009:605) observes that this proverb may be read equally well with Proverbs 10:1–15:32, following Van Leeuwen that reads it as a conclusion to this collection (cf. Treier 2011:61; Perdue 2000:159), or with Proverbs16:1–9 as an introduction to the next cluster which deals with "God's omniscience and omnipotence, to which the only acceptable responses are fear and its near equivalent humility." Clifford (1999:157), Dell (2006:111) and Venter (1999:719) all group verse 33 with 16:1–9 as the introductory proverb of this cluster. It is in any case clear that the verse function as a very strong link between the two sub-collections binding them together into one unit (Whybray [1979] 1990:159). Several scholars theorise that these references to Yahweh was deliberately made the theological centre, as well as positioned literally in the centre of Proverbs10:1–22:16 (Davis 2000:101; Heim 2001:63; Whybray 1994:131; Whybray 1979:159).

A text critical note from BHS propose reading מוּסָד (foundation stone), instead of מוּסַר (instruction or correction), compare Isaiah 28:16 where the laying of the foundation

stone in Zion is the subject under discussion. Or rather מוֹסַד (foundation or laying of the foundation stone), compare Proverbs 8:29 where Yahweh's establishing the foundations of the deep are the subject under discussion. The Masoretic Text, however, makes good sense and does not need to be altered, especially in the light of 4:1 and 15:11 where מוּסַר אָב (instruction of the father) operates similarly (Fox 2009:605, cf. Engelbrecht 1978:9). Also, Murphy (1998:114) points out that it is noteworthy that תּוֹכַחַת (reproof), a near semantic variant to מוּסַר, repeats in verses 31 and 32 of this chapter (cf. Waltke 2005:3). However, a deliberate play on words cannot be ruled out.

The terseness of the first colon allows for wide interpretation possibilities. Heim (2001:205) lists at least four possible interrelations: X being יִרְאַת יְהוָה (the fear of Yahweh) and Y being מוּסַר חָכְמָה (the instruction of wisdom):
X *is the source of* Y
X *is the beginning of* Y
X *is the right approach to* Y
X *is the result of* Y.

The interrelatedness between the fear of the Lord and the instruction of wisdom, in this proverb, is multi-directional and multi-faceted. For example, for Perdue (2000:159), it is to be understood that the fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, while Fox (2009:605) understands the fear of the Lord to be the contents of the wisdom teaching. Treier (2011:77) understands that to fear the Lord is to be instructed in wisdom, while Holladay (1988:186) understands that the correction leads to wisdom. Waltke (2005:3) reads the genitive construction, the instruction of wisdom, as a genitive of effects and translates: "The instruction that gives wisdom is the fear of the Lord. Doubtless, the terseness of the proverb intentionally encourages the reader to ponder the meaning of the proverb. Blocher (1977:6) brings it into connection with Proverbs 1:7 and Proverbs 9:10 and reads it as a variant of the same saying namely "the fear of the Lord as the 'principle' of wisdom" finding permission to do so in the stylistic habits of the sages or stereometric parallelism.

Davis (2000:100) notes that the second colon also is ambiguous in Hebrew as in English. Waltke (2005:3) notes that the preposition entails a verb of motion. It is significant to note that Proverbs 15:33b and Proverbs 18:12b are worded exactly the same. Fox (2009:605) remarks that a comparison of the two verses shows that 'before' indicates both temporal and causal priority. "What may appear to be contrary qualities are in this proverb paired as cause and effect" (Fox 2009:605). Murphy (1998:103) also notes the equation of wisdom and virtuous conduct in this and other proverbs. In Proverbs 22:4 the fear of Yahweh are connected to humility which, in that proverb, leads to riches, honour and life (Engelbrecht 1978:9).

Within the context of the value-system of honour and shame in Ancient Near Eastern communities, which scholars believe to be characteristic of those communities, "humility is a socially acknowledged claim to neutrality in the competition of life … a means value, that is, a course of action or behaviour which facilitates the realisation of honour, the core value of Mediterranean culture" (Malina [1993] 1998:118). Within this particular proverb it exemplifies a significant premise of Proverbs; that humility both goes before and, as well, leads to honour; the way to honour is through humility (Ross 2008; cf. Fox 2009:605; deSilva 2008:293).

To sum up, the poetics of this proverb may be described as follows: The fear of Yahweh and instruction of wisdom in the first colon are juxtaposed without an indication as to the possible interrelatedness of the two. This broadens the interpretation possibilities, stimulating reflection and highlighting the mutual correlation between wisdom instruction and the fear of the Lord. The two concepts of the first colon are then loosely connected to humility (Murphy 1998:115). Garret (1993:152) understands the proverb to be not so much about the fear of the Lord that teaches wisdom, but rather "that the wise are governed by the fear of the Lord." Humility are said to be before, meaning both valued above honour, the core value for ancient Near Eastern societies, as well as in the sense of a prerequisite that leads to honour. Humility delivers what pride desires but cannot attain (cf. Koss 2002:39).

Testing the five suppositions for reading Proverbs 15:33 as poetry: Parallelism functions as constructive device for this proverb as for the other proverbs in this enquiry and is the sign of the poetic function that focuses the reader on the message

of the proverb as such. As a text convention the resources of poetic expression illustrates the interrelatedness of the fear of Yahweh and the instruction of wisdom. This is at the same time a special way of imagining the world; through the otherness of the language that creates the impression of its revealedness, the proverb conveys the convergence of the divine and human reality. The metaphoric play is primarily on the level of the sentence and direct the reader to the symbolic world that the text references.

3.5.7 Concluding remarks

A few concluding remarks on the similarities and differences between the relevant proverbs will now be made. It is interesting to note that two out of six of the fear of Yahweh-proverbs in Proverbs 10:1–15:33, are not structured antithetically. Within this collection that is dominated by antithetic proverbs, it highlights these sayings so that they stand out within the collection because they diverge from the expected structuring pattern. These are Proverbs 14:26 that deal with the safety that the fear of Yahweh provides, as well as 15:33 where honour is promised through humility that is connected to the fear of Yahweh and the instruction of wisdom.

All of the Yahweh-proverbs in the collection state the benefit of the fear of the Lord, with the possible exception of Proverbs 14:2, where the benefit of walking in straightness is a benefit in terms of the accepted value system of Proverbs. These proverbs make use of a rhetoric of the desirable in order to persuade the reader to the fear of Yahweh. The desirable being held out to the reader is a prolonged life in 10:27, integrity (walking in straightness) in 14:2, security in 14:26, safety in 14:27, peace (implied by the juxtaposition of the disjointed colons) in 15:16, and honour in 15:33.

The antithetic proverbs have the added advantage of a double rhetoric and are able to state the disadvantages as well, in order to dissuade the reader from the antithetic element opposed to the fear of Yahweh that is different in each instance; wickedness in 10:27, wrong ways in 14:2, the snares of death in 14:27 and panic in a great storehouse in 15:16. These proverbs combine rhetoric of the desirable and of the undesirable to maximise the rhetorical effect of the proverb on the reader.

The fear of Yahweh-proverbs in this collection can be described as contra-intuitive. The element of fear in the expression 'the fear of Yahweh' is described in terms that are not expected. On closer inspection, this fear is revealed to be the cause of positive outcomes in a person's life; a long life, integrity, security, safety, peace and honour. Thus, the fear of the Lord is painted in positive terms and not in negative terms as one would intuitively expect. It is also sketched as something that enriches the quality and in one case (10:27) also the quantity of the life of an adherent to the fear of the Lord.

3.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, an identification and exploration of the relevant proverbs was undertaken. The enquiry concentrated on explanation or the 'what is said' according to Ricoeur (1976:19–22). In terms of Ricoeur's distinction between explanation and understanding it is necessarily the first stage of a hermeneutical enquiry.

Sandoval (2006:22) points out that by performing an examination of the lexical, syntactic, grammatical and formal elements and internal organisation of the relevant proverbs, the question as to how a text constructs patterns of value, may be answered. Careful consideration was given to the literal level for, according to Scott ([1989] 1990:49) it is the vehicle for the nonliteral level, the tenor. Thus, the proverbs in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 that deal with the fear of the Lord was considered so that the "meaning as sense" (Ricoeur 1976:19–20) may be discerned.

The five suppositions, which follow from the main presupposition that the proverbs are best read as poetry, was in each case also tested.

In this way, the content of chapter 3 will serve as the raw material from which the symbolic world that Proverbs references (cf. Ricoeur 1976:21–22) may be considered in chapter 4 in order to bring it into connection with the world of the contemporary reader in chapter 5.

Chapter 4: The symbolic world of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord

4.1 Introduction

Thus far, this study explored the proverbs in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 that have an explicit reference to the fear of the Lord, focusing on the 'what is said' according to Ricoeur (1976:19–20). The next step will be to describe the symbolical world they sketch for the reader of the literature, that is the 'about what it is said' or meaning as reference according to Ricoeur (1976:20–22), in order to relate it in the next chapter to the world of the contemporary reader.

4.2 The world in front of the text or symbolic-textual world of Proverbs 10:1–15:33

Brown (1999:xi–xii) rightly states that "communities of faith have no option except to imagine themselves, informed by faith and understanding, living within the formative and normative contours of the biblical world." This is true both for communities of faith as well as for individual Christians that take the Scriptures to be normative for their lives. He continues: "Such imagination is no flight of fancy. To the contrary, Christians are, in the words of Luke Timothy Johnson, called to a life of 'imagining the world Scripture imagines,' a life guided by faithful and moral imagination." In this enterprise, a Ricoeurian hermeneutic presents the readers of the Biblical text with a helpful apparatus. Ricoeur is interested in the role of figurative texts in the formation of human subjectivity and understands religious studies to be a hermeneutical inquiry into the imaginative potential of myth, symbol, and story to aid human efforts to exist with integrity (Wallace 1995:14).

The working of the metaphorical process has, in chapter 2, been shown to be a creation of meaning that is operative on both the level of the sentence as well as on the level of the text (Ricoeur 1976:19–22). As a work of discourse, "[m]etaphorical language is able to construct a new vision of reality" (Sandoval 2006:9). It has to do with the meaning of the text as reference (Ricoeur 1976:19–22).

Ricoeur distinguishes two levels of reference (Scott [1989] 1990:48): 1) a first order reference, tied to a literal interpretation which is weakened and leads to a 2) second order reference, when the literal level is suspended (Ricoeur 1975:84; cf. 1976:56–57; Sandoval 2006:9). A text may not only be describing reality in a literal, or empirically verifiable way, but may, through the literal meaning come to a metaphorical meaning and actively be creating a symbolical world (Sandoval 2006:10).

Scott ([1989] 1990:47–48) asserts: "At this second level, narrative is a model for redescribing reality. The mimesis of fiction is not a copy of reality but its redescription." Ricoeur points out that the redescriptive nature of Biblical texts or operation of parabolisation is not limited to those texts that are characteristically narrative, but is also at work in other literary genres (Ricoeur 1981:51) and can thus be applied equally well to Proverbs. The redescriptive nature of Biblical texts or operation of parabolisation is the operation of the Biblical form of imagination (Ricoeur 1981:3–4).

Thus, Ricoeur describes the poetic project as "one of destroying the world as we ordinarily take it for granted … To bring to language modes of being that ordinary vision obscures or even represses" (Ricoeur 1976:60). Wallace (1995:12) understands that "[t]he aim of an imaginative text is the creative imitation of human action – even as the purpose of metaphor … is to redescribe the actual world in terms of possibility." The text constructs, for the reader, a symbolic-textual world (Sandoval 2006:10). The structure of the world that the text projects in front of itself for the reader reveals the structure of reality (cf. Reese [1979] 1990:387).

In this way a text has the ability to "change one's view of, or relationship to, reality" (Sandoval 2006:9). "By virtue of its power to fuse the world of the text and the world of the reader" (Wallace 2000:305), the text draws the reader into the world that the text unfolds in front of itself (Ricoeur 1977:23).

Several scholars recognise that such a symbolic-textual reference is at work within the book of Proverbs. For example, Sandoval (2006:6) affirms: "Indeed the book of Proverbs constructs for its readers a complicated symbolic moral world." He then

goes on to explain the appropriateness and necessity of considering the book's figurative imagination, by pointing out that "[f]eatures internal to various proverbial sayings along with the book's programmatic prologue and the form of its short sentence sayings all point to the figurative quality of key aspects of the text" (Sandoval 2006:6).

Ansberry (2011:125) concludes that "Proverbs 10–24 incorporates aphorisms that reflect on the anthropocentric and theocentric dimensions of the world to offer a fundamental moral vision that (re)constructs the addressee's perception of reality and shapes his character."

From the prologue, Proverbs 1:2–6, Frydrych (2002:32–37) construe that the explicit intention of the book is to make a wise person out of the immature by vividly painting the consequences of wisdom and folly. He observes that various witnesses – the father, the grandfather, and even Wisdom herself – are brought in to testify to the benefits of wisdom and the shortcomings of folly. The book makes it clear to the reader, in the mind's eye, by sketching or painting the consequences of a choice between wisdom and folly. He continues: "Yet, as I have pointed out previously wisdom in Proverbs is not so much about knowing as about a commitment to a way of life, i.e., about doing through knowing" (Frydrych 2002:35).

Fox makes the same observation: "In fact, wisdom *is* an art, not a science, and the sages of wisdom are artists – הכמים, as artists are called in Exod 36:4. The sages are artists painting a world whose realities often lie beneath the visible surface" (Fox 2007:684, author's italics).

Clifford (2009:243) notes that "the performance aspect of Proverbs, its orientation to decision-making, explains a remarkable feature of the book of Proverbs. It does not provide factual data, its instructions are notably empty of "content," and its maxims can seem trite if one expects new data. Rather, Proverbs' sayings give readers a perspective." It is this perspective or symbolical-textual world with specific reference to the fear of Yahweh that will, in this chapter, be considered.

4.3   Some limiting factors

At the outset, it is necessary to state some confines to this endeavour. Boström (1990:31) points out that "[i]t is impossible to sketch a complete picture of the conceptions of God of either the sages or anyone else in the Old Testament context." This is true also of the concept of the fear of the Lord that is the content of this enquiry.

This is due to a few factors that have to be kept in mind. Boström (1990:31) cautions that access to information about the theology of Old Testament times is restricted. On account of Olsson, Boström (1990:31) differentiates between the mental concept and the express form in which the concept is communicated in, for example, texts and images. In Biblical studies, he points out, scholars are restricted in that they are dealing with the expressed form, which is by its very nature fragmentary.

In fact, and this Boström (1990:31) also points out, it is not even certain exactly who the producers of the book of Proverbs were. Further complicating the matter is the fact that the author(s)/redactor(s) of it, compiled the book over an extended period of time (Boström 1990:31, Whybray 1995:1). "The extensive span of time and the differences in thought patterns which separate us from the ancient sages, coupled with the limitations in the available source material makes our task even more difficult" (Boström 1990:31).

Furthermore, it is a question whether and in what way the intentions or conceptions of the author that lay behind a text, may indeed be fully discerned from the text (Lamarque 2006:177–188). What is more unproblematically discernable, however, is the world in front of the text that the text projects for the reader and that will be where the attention of this study will be focused.

It is also to be remembered that the language of the book of Proverbs is, as pointed out by Boström (1990:31), symbolic language which is "the mother tongue of faith" (Aulén in Boström 1990:31). Sandoval (2006) also focuses attention on the text of Proverbs's figurative and rhetorical imagination. It is not a book characterised by theological reflection, intended to be read as an exhaustive systematic doctrine; rather it is a work of primarily theological-ethical nature (Boström 1990:31). Any

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conclusions, based on a reading of Proverbs, that takes seriously the symbolical aspects and figurative imagination of the text cannot claim to be exhaustive of a full understanding of the phenomenon under consideration, as symbolical language is by its very nature limited to describing certain aspects, and not the whole, of the phenomenon under consideration.

In the same vein, Frydrych (2002:18–23) describes the proverbial project as functioning as a paradigm which is a tool of the practical mode of thought. He notes that 'the practical mode of thought' is other than 'the exact mode of thought', that has as its objective to describe fully the mechanics of a phenomenon (cf. Perdue 2000:33–35). To understand a given phenomenon then is to be able "to describe fully the mechanics of it, to describe it *as it really is*" (Frydrych 2002:18, author's italics). This is, according to him, a concept of understanding frequently found in the exact sciences or a subject field such as dogmatics.

Over and against the exact mode of thought is the practical mode of thought, or practical knowledge, that will, under certain circumstances for practical reasons, settle for paradigmatic understanding or understanding that is only partial (Frydrych 2002:19). "At the heart of practical knowledge is a paradigm. By a paradigm I mean a theoretical system, which describes a behaviour of some other real system, and is used to predict the state of the real system on the basis of some input data. However, the theoretical system, i.e., the paradigm, is always simpler than the real system" (Frydrych 2002:19).

According to him, the enterprise reflected in Proverbs is paradigmatic. That is, it is understood by the book that the depiction of the world it offers is incomplete, but the possible error is considered of only limited significance under the specific circumstances. The book offers understanding with a practical end in mind and the value of this understanding is in its practical application. "The paradigm is constructed as a kaleidoscope, where the whole image of the world is constructed by a combination of the glimpses that the individual proverbs offer, and is more than a simple sum of the parts" (Frydrych 2002:43; cf. Murphy 1998:xxvi).

Thus, what is presented in Proverbs is not intended to be understood as a product of the exact mode of thought and is thus not meant to be exhaustive. Any conclusions based on a reading of Proverbs that takes seriously the paradigmatic character of the text cannot claim to be exhaustive of a full understanding of the phenomenon under consideration, as practical knowledge is by its very nature limited to describing certain aspects of the phenomenon under consideration under a very specific set of circumstances.

In addition to this, Parsons (1993:159) cautions that the limitations caused by the literary form of the proverbs must be taken into account when interpreting them. The proverbs are limited by the characteristics of brevity and catchiness and he notices that on the surface some proverbs read almost like an algebraic equation or mechanical law. However, he cites Fee and Stuart's apt observation that proverbs are worded to be memorable rather than technically precise. Thus the very nature of their literary form necessitates that the proverbs in some instances overstate the case and oversimplify without including fine print or footnotes with lists of exceptions (Parsons 1993:159; cf. Murphy 1998:xxv–xxvi). The necessary corollary, is that individual proverbs have to be read together, in this case the proverbs concerned with the fear of the Lord, in order to get a fuller picture of the sages thinking or understanding as will be done in this research.

Another factor to be noted, is one that Whybray ([1979] 1990:158) calls attention to. He emphasises that each of the Yahweh-sayings in Proverbs 15:33–16:9 is an individual entity and that there are not necessarily a progression of ideas to be observed within this small collection. However, he notices that whoever put them together to form a group of sayings clearly intended through this to present to the reader a picture of the character of Yahweh and Yahweh's relation to the world and to persons, as well as the principles of conduct which Yahweh requires of them. This observation is most relevant to this study. Although a progression in the idea of the fear of Yahweh is not necessarily to be observed in Proverbs 10:1–15:33, the sayings within their context put together, nevertheless paint a picture for the reader of Proverbs' understanding of the fear of the Lord.

It can be concluded that the reflections represented in this study is in no way intended to be exhaustive of the full conception of Proverbs with regard to the fear of Yahweh. One can only make limited inferences concerning the book's concept of the fear of Yahweh by investigating the way this is referred to in the texts (cf. Boström 1990:144). What is presented here is intended to be a reflection on Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord, read with an eye towards the symbolic-textual world that the text projects for the reader. This will hopefully be helpful for the modern-day reader to come to a clearer, though not exhaustive, understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord presented in the text.

4.4   Describing the symbolic world of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord

Reese ([1979] 1990:386) describes this stage of the hermeneutical enquiry as lying "at the heart of interpretation". He explains that this step takes the reader out beyond the reach of first-order reference, that is, beyond direct contact with manipulable objects, into a deeper reality. According to him the distinctive attribute of theological or religious texts are their claim to point to a unique, transcendent reference and he notes that such texts are in touch with the fullness of reality. He is in accord with Ricoeur, affirming that these texts' reference dimension gives interpretation a new depth: "'To interpret is to explicate the sort of being-in-the-word unfolded in front of the text' … The interpreter's task is 'to explicate 'the world of the text''". That world stands forth in front of the text as reality in its own right (Ricoeur in Reese [1979] 1990:386).

Thus, the aim of this section of this study is to describe the second order or transcendent reference of the text of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord; the "deeper reality" (Reese [1979] 1990:386) that the text points to. An explication of the sort of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text will be afforded attention in the next chapter that will contemplate the fusion of the world of the text and the world of the reader. To achieve the current section's aim Brueggemann's notion of interpretation as imagination will be drawn upon.

Brueggemann understands "imagination to be the capacity to entertain images of meaning and reality that are out beyond the evident givens of observable experience. That is, imagination is the hosting of "otherwise"" (Brueggemann 2002:17). Biblical literature is, according to him, "not merely descriptive of a commonsense world; it dares, by artistic sensibility and risk-taking rhetoric, to posit, characterize and vouch for a world beyond the 'common sense'" in which Yahweh is the defining character (Brueggemann 2003:9; cf. Perdue 2000:33).

Perdue (2000:8) describes something of the second-order reference or symbolic universe that the sages constructed imaginatively for their readers:

> In their linguistic portrayals of God, humanity, and the world, the sages were also aesthetes who activated their imagination to project a reality of order and beauty in which human society was to be a microcosm of justice and symmetry, present both in nature and character of God, and who used their language to construct artistic and compelling literary worlds of beauty and delight. They invited the unlearned to take up the study of wisdom and enter those worlds of imagination, where well-being was to be had. Those who took up wisdom's path to understanding entered a symbolic universe of order, goodness, and artistry, a universe constructed by the imagination of learned sages.

(Perdue 2000:8)

When interpreting Scripture the reader stands in this same line of risk-taking imaginative engagement, reading the text with an eye towards the world beyond the common sense which the text posit, characterise and vouch for.

Brueggemann (2002:17) insists firstly that imagination is inevitable in the interpretive process if interpretation is ever to be anything more than simple reiteration. Rather than mere reiteration, interpretation is "the movement of the text beyond itself in fresh ways, often ways never offered until this moment of utterance" (Brueggemann 2002:17). He finds the transformative energy of the text in the "interplay between the *normative* and the *imaginatively playful*" (Brueggemann 2003:xii, author's italics). According to him, imagination is unavoidably necessary for readers of the text who insist that this ancient text is a contemporary word to the modern-day reader

(Brueggemann 2002:17).

Secondly, faithful imagination is characteristically not autonomous fantasy but good-faith extrapolation (Brueggemann 2002:16). Imaginative interpretation of a text places considerable responsibility on the reader. Meaning is generated on the basis of the encounter between the text's potential meanings and the reader's interpretive construals of the same (Wallace 2000:306).

The confession that the Scriptures are inspired is a vital reassurance for, according to Brueggemann, it pertains not only to the origin of the text, but to its transmission and interpretation as well (cf. Brueggemann 2002:24). He maintains that the Spirit meets readers afresh in their faithful reading in each new time, place and circumstance (Brueggemann 2002:16). The faithful affirmation that the Biblical text is the Word of God is not a guarantee that an imaginative interpretation will be inspired, but it represents a starting point from which the interpreter may be open to the whispering of the Spirit in and through the text.

4.4.1 Some broad characteristics of the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs related to the concept of the fear of the Lord

It is from this starting point that an imaginative description of the symbolic world of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of Yahweh will now be undertaken. Some broad characteristics of the symbolic world related to the concept of the fear of Yahweh will be pointed out in order to come later to the specifics that the fear of Yahweh-sayings reference.

The first observation to be made of this symbolic-textual world is that reality includes the transcendent. Specifically, the monotheistic God of Israel, Yahweh (Perdue 2000:36). This might seem to be stating the obvious, as in a sense it is, because the fear of the Lord is a central theme within the whole book of Proverbs. It can therefore be concluded that the presence of the God of Israel in the world, who is to be feared, is a datum for the sages.

Bullock (2009:11) notes that "the covenant name appears eighty-seven times in the book, with only five occurrences of the generic name for God" and concludes that "[t]his clearly classifies the theology of Proverbs as centre-stage covenant theology, thus connecting it directly to Mosaic faith." Similarly Dell (2006:149) notes that it is striking that (apart from one possible reference to Elohim in Proverbs 14:9, a verse that is difficult to translate) the name Yahweh to reference God is exclusively used in the collection Proverbs 10:1–22:16. Frydrych (2002:89) notes that the "systematic use of the personal name יהוה indicates a clear effort … to identify emphatically with the Yahwistic religion."

The fact that it is very specifically the God of Israel, Yahweh, that is to be feared, is notable, as the international character of wisdom literature and especially Proverbs have been noted by many scholars (see among others Boström 1990:9–10; Venter 1999:708; Aitkin 2001:406; Shupak 2005; Schwab 2009:455–456).

With regard to this observation, some questions, which falls outside of the scope of this study, comes to mind. The question of the relationship between Proverbs (22:17–24:22) and the Instruction of Amenemope (see Fox 2009) and other Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature (see Shupak 2005:203–220), as well as the question of the possibility of a later, specifically Yahwistic, redaction of Proverbs that reinterpreted older mundane wisdom (see McKane 1970; Whybray [1979] 1990). As these debates fall outside the scope of this study, for the purposes of this study, as mentioned in chapter 2, the final form of the text as we have it in *Biblia Hebraica Stutgartensia* will simply be used.

The international character of the Biblical wisdom literature, and Proverbs in particular, that share striking similarity in form, genre and content with other Ancient Near Eastern societies, such as Egyptian, Sumerian, Akkadian and other North-west Semitic civilisations (Longman 2006:42–56; Clifford 2007) highlights the specificity of Proverbs when referring to a single deity namely Yahweh (Whybray 1995:6–17). Longman (2006:52) remarks, on the significance of this, that in many ways "wisdom literature may be the most widely shared genre in the ancient Near East."

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The use of the tetragrammaton, very specifically connects the Proverbial wisdom tradition, with the rest of the Old Testament tradition even though such national institutions such as temple, law or covenant (Schwab 2011:195) and the dominant traditions of Israel, that is salvation history, law, prophecy and cult function (Nel 2002:436; cf. Boström 1990:41–44) are scarcely alluded to in Proverbs. This acknowledged, however, Clements (2003:437) points out that what can be called covenant concerns are not the main concern of the sages.

Boström notes the consequences of this observation: "It indicates that the other books of the Old Testament constitute the primary theological context for understanding what is said about God and his relationship to the world in the book of Proverbs" (Boström 1990:44). He remarks that traits of a concept of God which can be regarded as inconsistent with Israelite traditions concerning God is very difficult to observe and that this argues for a view of the Israelite wisdom tradition as being firmly established within the Yahwistic faith, while at the same time being universal (Boström 1990:88).

The phrase 'the fear of Yahweh' also connects the wisdom tradition with the monotheistic Torah tradition, according to Bullock (2009:11). He describes the phrase as having dual citizenship in both the Torah and Wisdom writings. He notes that the sages' instruction as well as the teaching of the parents in Proverbs is called תּוֹרָה, thus connecting the instruction of Proverbs very specifically with Yahwistic piety. Dell (2006:187) concludes in her study, of the social and theological context of the book of Proverbs, that it is more unified with other parts of the Old Testament than scholars have generally acknowledged.

This should be sufficient to indicate that despite the international character of the proverbs in the book of Proverbs, sharing form and content with writings from non-Yahwistic cultures, the symbolic world of Proverbs references specifically Israel's monotheistic covenant God, Yahweh. Murphy aptly states: "Wisdom and Yahwism go together" (Murphy in Dell 2006:147).

Notably, Yahweh is the creator-God. Bullock (2009:6) states that no other theological concept is more characteristic of wisdom than creation. According to

him, creation can be seen as the platform of wisdom's theology (cf. Dell 2006:125–154). Boström (1990:80–89), however, cautions against "referring to creation faith as the single underlying theology of the whole book" (Boström 1990:87) and places it alongside other components of the theological understanding reflected in the book of Proverbs.

God is also transcendent. Boström (1990:144), in his study of Proverbs' understanding of God, uses the term "in relation to the nature of God to signify that which to its essence is not bound by, or limited to, this world and its boundaries." Consequently, it can be concluded that Yahweh, according to the sages, is by no means bound by the spatial and temporal limitations that humans are subject to (Boström 1990:144). Yahweh existed and was active before the world of humans was created (cf. Frydrych 2002:87).

The world is, according to the sages, the result of the creative activity of God (Frydrych 2002:99). Boström goes on to explain that the sages' view of God as transcendent does not contradict the belief that Yahweh was seen by them as active and present in the world (Boström 1990:144). Although not at all bound by or limited to the world, God is concerned with and involved in the world, attending to and having interest in both the human world and creation in general.

Therefore, reality can never be independent of God (Venter 1999:710). Frydrych (2002:83) states that "God is a crucial ingredient of the world the sages saw themselves as a part of, for their world is ultimately God's world. He is inseparable from the world through which he is known, and consequently neither can the cosmos be separated from, and therefore understood apart from, him."

For Proverbs, God's created world is the sphere of the living and the arena for exercising wisdom (Frydrych 2002:99). Dell (2006:134) notes that the concept of order is a close companion to that of creation and can be held together with that doctrine as long as the concept does not become too deterministic. Similarly, Boström (1990:136–139) and Frydrych (2002:99–107) both emphasise the active role of Yahweh, who is the sovereign Lord, in the establishment and maintenance of the created order, over and against a mechanical view of retribution and order.

Perdue (2000:11) finds this order to be rooted in the character of God. Dell (2001:419) notes that "the pattern of good and evil is linked to a world order in which YHWH is the controller of an order that is essentially orientated towards the good."

The established order orientated towards the good is especially valid with regards to the social world. Frydrych (2002:23) maintains that with regards to the human world, at the heart of the proverbial perspective, is an all inclusive polarised world. That is to say, the world of people is essentially bifurcated into one of two antithetical camps (Perdue 2000:39). These are the righteous-wise on the one hand and the wicked-fools on the other, especially evident from the antithetical sayings of Proverbs 10–15 (Ansberry 2010:162).

Some scholars (cf. Boström 1990:213–215; Ansberry 2010:162; Heim 2001:80–103; Frydrych 2002:23–32) have noticed the use of certain characteristic vocabulary with regards to the polarised human world of the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs being referenced:

> While these moral and intellectual polarities, their synonyms and equivalent phrases, overlap in certain instances (Proverbs 10:16–17, 31; 11:9, 30), the antithetical sets are not interchangeable. However, their relationship may be described as co-referential. That is, the antitheses do not have the same meaning or sense, but they refer to the same reality, the same referent in a given context. The righteous/wise, the wicked/fool, and related vocabulary in either semantic field describe the positive and negative, the moral and intellectual traits of the same type of person.
>
> (Ansberry 2010:162)

According to Frydrych (2002:23), the use of vocabulary to reference these two categories are complex, but for the purposes of this study righteous-wise versus wicked-fool should be sufficient designations to reference these. The righteous-wise, in the fear of the Lord, conform their lives, character and actions to the created order established by Yahweh, to the benefit of themselves as well as their family and community. Contrarily, the wicked-fools obstinately resist the created order

established by Yahweh, to their own upset and that of their family and community (Frydrych 2002:170; Venter 1999:710).

In this way, the fear of the Yahweh orientates the lives of the righteous-wise towards the good. Frydrych (2002:32) states that for the sages the bipolarity of the human society was more than just a convenient and simple way of describing it, but rather they believed it to be engraved, by divine design, deep into the fabric of the entire world. Consequently they had an unshakable conviction that God who created and have complete control over the world, unequivocally favours the righteous-wise over the wicked-fool. As a result of the role that God plays in it, the proverbial world is regular and predictable and those who follow the path of wisdom will succeed in it and prosper (Frydrych 2002:32).

4.4.2 The specifics of the fear of Yahweh-sayings in Proverbs 10:1–15:33

With the abovementioned broad and general characteristics of the symbolic world of Proverbs related to the concept of the fear of Yahweh stated, the specifics of the fear of Yahweh-sayings in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 and their reference now comes to the fore.

It is to be borne in mind that the proverbs should be read together as they give the reader a kaleidoscopic view of the symbolic-textual world that they reference. The book as a whole constructs for the reader a symbolic world (cf. Sandoval 2006:10). What Ricoeur (1981:10) says of parables in 'The Bible and the imagination', is equally true of proverbs: "we are entering into the process of intertextuality – the parables, in effect, should be read together. Together they constitute a universe of meaning in which the symbolic potentialities of one contribute, by means of their common context, to making the potentialities of another explicit." In other words, in terms of this study, the proverbs should be read together as constituting a universe of meaning, in which the symbolic potentialities of one proverb contribute to making the potentialities of another proverb explicit, by means of their common context within both the smaller collections that make up the book (in this case Proverbs 10:1–15:33) as well as the larger collection of collections that is the book of Proverbs.

4.4.2.1 Proverbs 10:27

יִרְאַת יְהוָה תּוֹסִיף יָמִים וּשְׁנוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּקְצֹרְנָה:

The fear of Yahweh will cause to increase days
but the years of the wicked will be shortened.

This proverb references a world in which Yahweh is a determining factor to be reckoned with. Fearing the Lord or its antithesis, being wicked, has an effectual outcome in a person's life, suggested by the causative תּוֹסִיף (hiph'il). The fear of Yahweh increases the days of the righteous-wise whereas the years of the wicked-fools will be shortened. Furthermore, the imperfect form of the verbs, תּוֹסִיף and תִּקְצֹרְנָה, denote a dimension of future expectancy. The symbolic world of Proverbs is a stable predictable world, one in which the outcome of attitudes and behaviours can be predicted (cf. Frydrych 2002:170).

This could be read as indicating a deterministic, automatic and mechanical world where a person through his/her own character and actions determine their future, either positive or negative, but the passive verb in the second colon, תִּקְצֹרְנָה, combined with the mention of Yahweh in the first, hints at divine activity. This indirect way of referencing divine activity, alludes to a world in which Yahweh is actively involved, determining the appropriate consequences (cf. Frydrych 2002:106) though often operative in the background. As noted above, in this world Yahweh is the guarantor of just rewards (Boström 1990:217).

The antithetical structure of the proverb is a literary expression of the symbolic-textual world that the proverb sketch (cf. Loader 1986:107–110). As mentioned earlier, the human world is for the scribes bifurcated between the righteous-wise and the wicked-fools (Ansberry 2010:162). These are in antithetical opposition to each other and for Proverbs, there is no other category. This proverb diverges from the use of the expected vocabulary with רָשָׁע (the wicked) being contrasted with the fear of Yahweh; normally it stands in opposition to צַדִּיק (righteous). This implies that in

the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs there is a contingent relationship between righteousness and the fear of the Lord, and conversely between wickedness and not fearing Yahweh (this is also evident from Proverbs 14:2).

Within the literary context of this cluster, these proverbs together outline a sense of positive future expectancy for the righteous wise. Various scholars group verses 27–30 together (Garrett 1993:122; Ironside 2006:74), while others group verses 27–32 into a unit (Murphy 1998:76; Engelbrecht 1978:6). Heim (2001:131) designates the cluster to range from 10:23–30 with two main sections, 1) verses 23–25 and 2) 27–30, separated by verse 26. The immediate literary context seems to be best described as verses 27–30.

The sense of positive future expectancy for the righteous wise finds expression in verse 27 in increase of days, in verse 28 hope brings joy, in verse 29 the way of the Lord is a stronghold (similarly the fear of the Lord is in 14:26) and in verse 30 the righteous will never be removed from the land. The first and last verse of the cluster both remind of the familiar covenantal promise of a long life and inheritance of the land. In this way, the proverb references the patriarchal covenant tradition (cf. Heim 2001:132). It has already been remarked that the proverbial wisdom tradition is through the use of the personal name Yahweh, very specifically linked to the rest of the Old Testament tradition. The symbolic-textual world that Proverbs constructs for its readers, reference the world of the patriarchs and Israel.

The converse of the positive future expectancy for the righteous-wise is a negative future expectancy for the wicked-fool; shortening of years in verse 27, perishing expectation in verse 28, destruction to evildoers in verse 29 and no dwelling in the land in verse 30. The severity of the repercussions for the wicked that do not fear Yahweh is, in this proverb, indicated by the years being shortened as opposed to the lengthening of days. This is suggestive of the high regard for, and due to, Yahweh in the proverbial world. An offensive attitude (and resultant behaviour) toward God, rightly and justly, merits a severe chastisement.

The experience of the righteous-wise and wicked-fools of Yahweh in the proverbial textual world is quite different. For the righteous-wise the Lord is protection and

security, whereas for the wicked-fool destruction. This indicates that the relationship between Yahweh and a person in the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs is reciprocal (Boström 1990:220). Fear of Yahweh is answered with a positive reaction, in this case by an increase of days, and wickedness with a negative retort, in this case by a shortening of years. It can be concluded that in the symbolic-textual world that Proverbs references for its reader, Yahweh is to be feared.

4.4.2.2   Proverbs 14:2

הוֹלֵךְ בְּיָשְׁרוֹ יְרֵא יְהוָה וּנְלוֹז דְּרָכָיו בּוֹזֵהוּ׃

Walker in his straightness fearer of Yahweh
but goer on his wrong ways despiser of him.

With the analysis of this proverb in chapter 3, it became clear that the indeterminacy of the subject and predicate in both colons, give expression to Proverbs' conviction about the congruency between an internal disposition and outward action or behaviour of a person. This gives the reader a glance into the proverbial world in which the internal and external realities of a person are not segregated, but permeate each other, to become the motivation for moral conduct, either good or bad. This interconnectedness of the internal and external realities of moral conduct and the motivation thereof is being reflected in the proverb.

It has already been mentioned that the proverbial world of people are divided into one of two categories: 1) the righteous-wise walking in straightness/uprightness or 2) wicked-fools going on wrong ways. The good or bad moral behaviour of a person is here expressed with the metaphor of 'the way'; another expression of the book's view of the world as bifurcated in terms of the two courses that a person can take. The rhetorical force of the metaphor of the straight or crooked way to reference the moral-ethical behaviour of a person brings the reader to a choice. Consequently in the proverbial world a person can be found to be on either of two paths: 1) in the fear of Yahweh going in straightness or 2) despising Yahweh going on wrong ways. Reality presents a person with a choice either for good moral-ethical behaviour or for

bad. The choice one makes in outward conduct both reflects, as well as being motivation for, inward reality and vice versa.

The metaphoric expression of 'the two ways', found in this proverb (and others), should not mislead the reader to think of moral-ethical behaviour in abstract terms. In the proverbial world this is not abstract categories, but has very concrete manifestation in a person's conduct. This is expressed in the proverb by specifically designating his ways, דְּרָכָיו, with the pronominal suffix third person male singular. Frydrych (2002:171) perceives this with regard to the fear of the Lord. According to him the fear of Yahweh

> has to do primarily with turning away from evil … The notion of good and evil are dictated by the stable nature of the proverbial world, which leads to a fairly rigid code of proper behaviour. The divine order defines what should be done, i.e., what is good, and what should not be done, i.e., what is evil. These are absolute in Proverbs and all pervasive; virtually every activity that the book is interested in can be classified under these two rubrics. Yet, it would be misleading to think of good and evil in the book as abstract theological categories; in Proverbs these are largely about what people do to other people.

> (Frydrych 2002:171)

Ross (2008) group 14:1–32 together and understand this section to be focusing on wise living and spelling out the practical implications of wisdom. Thus, within this context it can be seen that this proverb envisions very concrete behaviour rather than abstract moral-ethical postulations.

Heim (2001:171–173) proposes the immediate literary context to be the cluster 14:1–3 in which verse 2 is highlighted by the chiastic arrangement of similar vocabulary in verses 1 and 3. Similarly, Whybray ([1979] 1990:162) reads verses 1 and 2 together and understand חַכְמוֹת נָשִׁים, in verse 1 to reference personified Wisdom, the only occurrence of this sort outside of chapters 1–9 according to him. He sees in verse 2 a theological interpretation of personified Wisdom and that the fear of Yahweh glosses the concept of personified Wisdom.

Heim (2001:173) sees in these verses, rather than the personification and a theological interpretation of Wisdom, a more concrete function, namely relating attributes which establish or jeopardise one's life. He understands חַכְמוֹת נָשִׁים (wisest of women), הוֹלֵךְ בְּיָשְׁרוֹ (walker in his straightness) and חֲכָמִים (the wise), in these verses Proverbs 14:1-3, to be co-referential, indicating the same type of person. Bearing in mind the above mentioned congruency between an internal disposition and outward action or behaviour of a person, the cluster sketches the concrete application of wisdom in the righteous-wise person's life in constructive practices, upright conduct and wise speech. Conversely the actualisation of folly is in destructive practices, deceitful conduct and foolish speech of the wicked-fool's life.

This small cluster read in the broader context of chapter 14, where the practical implications of wisdom are spelled out (Ross 2008), point the reader to the practice of wisdom or folly in a person's life. In the light of verse 2, a person's stance toward Yahweh has a significant bearing on that person's moral-ethical behaviour, with a person's moral-ethical behaviour congruently reinforcing the inward disposition either of fear of Yahweh or despising the Lord.

4.4.2.3   Proverbs 14:26

בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה מִבְטַח־עֹז וּלְבָנָיו יִהְיֶה מַחְסֶה׃

In the fear of Yahweh the trust of strength
and for his sons he will be a place of refuge.

Verse 26 and 27 should be read together, as they stand together and both make reference to the fear of Yahweh. Together they give a kaleidoscopic view on the proverbial world (cf. Boström 217–218).

Verse 26, through sketching the fear of Yahweh metaphorically as a place of refuge, glimpses the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs in which the fear of Yahweh is a very tangible protection (cf. also Proverbs 18:10). It does this by utilising the symbolic value of the spatial dimension that is created by the combination of the proposition בְּ (in), indicating locality in the first colon, with מַחְסֶה (a place of refuge) in

the second as a metaphor for safety. There is no doubt that the proverb testifies to something that Proverbs considers to be very real (cf. Frydrych 2002:93).

The intangible reality of the fear of the Lord is seen by them to be a very real place of refuge in which the righteous-wise can confidently place their trust and find safety there. Heim (1990:186) notes that when the verb בָּטַח (feel safe or trust) is being used in the Old Testament in a positive sense, God is almost invariably the object of trust. The immense trust that the sages had in the Lord to provide safety and security for those who fear Yahweh is reinforced and finds further expression in the metaphoric reference to the place of refuge in the second colon.

The proverb diverges from the expected pattern of antithetic parallelism, that is so common in 10:1–15:33. It is instead, constructed in synonymous parallelism, that is textually expressing the flow of the benefit of the fear of Yahweh from one generation to the next in the symbolic world of Proverbs, as the proverb flows from colon A to colon B. Boström (1990:217; cf. also 220) notices in the proverb's reference to the children of the fearer of Yahweh that the seeming individualism of wisdom is not a strictly defined view. Through the proverb, the reader glimpses a world in which the protection that the fear of Yahweh provides is extended to one's family.

How this happens is not specified in the proverb. The subject of the second colon remains uncertain: it could be either the parent or Yahweh or both that are the refuge of the children. In the proverbial world, the benefit of the fear of Yahweh may also come to the children through the parent, who finds a strong confidence in Yahweh, making both the parent and Yahweh the place of refuge for the next generation. This assurance is the grounds for the proverb's appeal. The proverb simultaneously declares that in the fear of Yahweh one may find surety of strength and confidence in safety, as well as invite the reader to place his/her trust in it, to the benefit of self and one's progeny.

This is not a foreign idea to the Old Testament and is also found outside the proverbial tradition, particularly in the Decalogue (Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10). In this way, the proverb references the Mosaic tradition (cf. Ross 2008). It has already been remarked that the proverbial wisdom tradition is through the use of the

personal name Yahweh, very specifically linked to the rest of the Old Testament tradition. Again, as in Proverbs 10:27, this proverb establishes a connection with the extra-proverbial Biblical tradition. The symbolic-textual world that Proverbs constructs for its readers, reference the world of Moses and the people of Israel.

4.4.2.4   Proverbs 14:27

יִרְאַת יְהוָה מְקוֹר חַיִּים לָסוּר מִמֹּקְשֵׁי מָוֶת׃

The fear of Yahweh the source of life
to keep far from the snares of death.

The wording of Proverbs 13:14 is exactly the same as in 14:27, except that תּוֹרַת חָכָם (the teaching of the wise) is here substituted with יִרְאַת יְהוָה (the fear of the Lord). With this, the proverb set up an interconnectedness between the teaching of the wise and the fear of the Lord, as also in Proverbs 15:33 where instruction in wisdom is connected with the fear of Yahweh. In the world that Proverbs sketch for the reader, the teaching of the wise and the fear of Yahweh are not opposed to each other but in league (cf. Proverbs 1:7, and 9:10), to keep the righteous-wise far from the snares of death.

This proverb employs the literary motif of the source or fountain of life to imagine or picture for the reader a symbolic reality. As in the previous proverb this is a powerful metaphor for the fear of the Lord, precisely because of the tangibility of the symbol, that effectively carries the force of the metaphor. Grounded in the concrete situation of the Ancient Near East, where the dryer climate augments water as a necessity for life, the source or fountain functioned within that society as a very well-known symbol of life and sustenance or nourishment. In the proverbial world that is referenced by the text, the fear of Yahweh is as indispensable as a source or fountain to life.

In combination with the metaphoric employment of the motif of the source of life, the benefit of the fear of the Lord is effectively conveyed with לָסוּר the infinitive construction designating a purpose clause; the fear of the Lord is for/ has the purpose of keeping far from the snares of death. In the symbolic-textual world of

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Proverbs the fear of Yahweh, as in Proverbs 14:26, provides safety.

Parallelism structures the text by simultaneously setting up a relationship of equivalence between the fear of Yahweh and the purpose of keeping away from the snares of death, as well as a relationship of opposition between the source of life and snares of death. The structure of the proverb, evidences the structure of the proverbial world in which there is a coherency between the fear of Yahweh and the purpose of keeping away from the snares of death. The preposition מִן in מִמֹּקְשֵׁי denotes a sense of 'out of' or 'away from' indicating direction of movement in a spacial sense away from (Holladay 1988:200) the snares of death.

The idea that is expressed, seem to be that the fear of Yahweh directs the righteous-wise's movement, giving expression to the anthropocentric viewpoint of this proverb that places considerable emphasis on man's own role in escaping misfortune (Boström 1990:217–218). In the world that the book constructs for its readers, a person may, through the fear of Yahweh, escape the snares of death. Boström (1990:217–218) notices in the snares of death a reference to the fate of the wicked-fool that is brought on by his/her own behaviour.

The single source of life, that is for the purpose of keeping the righteous-wise out of the snares of death, is contrasted with the many snares that may ensnare a person. Here the reader of Proverbs glimpses a world beset with many dangers that can ensnare a person, but at the same time get into view the single source of protection that is the fear of the Lord. Hildebrandt (1992:443) points out that the poetic structure of antithetic parallelism, so frequently utilised in Proverbs, unleashes a powerful motivation combination: It encourages approach toward or favourable reception of the good and at the same time persuade to avoidance and rejection of the bad.

In combination, verse 26 and 27 vividly paint the fear of Yahweh as a place of refuge and a source of life, that is, a sphere of secure safety and nourishing sustenance. Together they invite the reader to inhabit the safe sphere that the fear of Yahweh provides. Within the broader structure of the chapter these proverbs inform the

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meaning of the other fear of Yahweh proverb (14:2); to walk in straightness is to be safe and secure, it is a matter of life or death also for the next generation.

4.4.2.5 Proverbs 15:16

טוב־מְעַט בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה מֵאוֹצָר רָב וּמְהוּמָה בוֹ:

Better a little in the fear of Yahweh
than a great storehouse and panic in it.

In this proverb, the economy of the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs comes into view. The value or worth of commodities is being assessed. The proverbial world is a world in which the relative value of commodities is evaluated against the backdrop of the effect or result thereof in the lives of the people possessing it. Here commodities or possessions have little value in themselves, but may have great or no worth depending on the effect of it on the human world. Thus, the proverb can declare that a little in the fear of Yahweh is better than a great storehouse and panic in it.

As mentioned in chapter 3, the form of the proverb, being disjointed parallelism, is significant. The proverb, by its form, invites the reader to participate in its reasoning. Here the analytical nature of the proverbs becomes evident. Fox (2004:176) states: "If read carefully, then, the disjointed proverbs not only transmit packets of truths, they also *train* the reader in a mode of thinking: identifying behaviors and associating them with their consequences. In other words, they train the reader to think like a sage."

Imperfect or disjointed parallelism leaves a gap between the lines. When the missing component – a premise or a conclusion – is mentally supplied the proverb persuades its reader to evaluate the values and experiences that are being encapsulated in the proverb (Fox 2009:598). Perry (in Fox 2009:598), propose the following evaluation of values, of which two are omitted in this Proverb, marked from best to worse with positive and negative values according to the speaker's implied value system:

"1. (A') a great storehouse and (B) fear of the Lord (+/+)

2. (A') a great storehouse and (B') turmoil (+/-)

3. (A) sparse food and (B) fear of the Lord (-/+)

4. (A) sparse food and (B') turmoil (-/-)"

Through an assertion of relative value, the proverb negotiates the values of the proverbial world and the reader is encouraged and trained to think about and evaluate things and not just accept the worth that is given to commodities by society. Treier (2011:89), Fox (2009:595) and Clements (2003:451) notes, in connection with this proverb, the underlying perspective of Proverbs concerning ultimate profit namely the worth of the fear of Yahweh is valued above wealth.

This is especially true because of the resulting effect that the fear of Yahweh has on the person. By implication it supplies peace or inner joy. This is evident from the immediate literary context. Heim (2001:196–199) indicates that this proverb can be read as part of a cluster ranging from 15:13–18. The cluster is loaded with terms denoting emotions (Heim 2001:198) and references to a banquet and eating. Whybray ([1979] 1990:161) notes the close relation between verses 16 and 17 that is for him evident not only from the contents of the two proverbs, but also from the parallelism of their form. His supposition that verse 16 elevates the thought of verse 17 to a religious plane is helpful, especially in the light of reading the proverb in its present canonical shape and context. Whybray ([1979] 1990:161) and Heim (2001:198–199) both note the influence that verse 16 has on the understanding of the surrounding proverbs. In this context, the fear of Yahweh is identified as a source of inner peace.

The close relationship between the book of Proverbs and the Instruction of Amenemope, that is especially evident from Proverbs 15:16–17 and the Instruction of Amenemope 9.5–8, was referred to in chapter 3. Which of the two works was first and influenced the other, is by no means certain and the debate continues (for a discussion on the debate see Shupak 2005). However, the mere fact that there is such a close resemblance between the two writings reveals something of the international character of wisdom literature and the world view of Proverbs.

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Frydrych (2002:90) states: "The use of יהוה here denotes not so much that Yahweh, the God revealed in the Israelite cult, is the sages' God, but rather that the sages' God, witnessed in the world, is Yahweh, who also revealed himself in the cult." He notes that the sages did not consider Yahweh to be a local deity, but rather that His influence was universal and could be discerned by peoples not partaking in Israel's cult. Thus, without deciding the debate of the mutual influence of the two ancient texts, Proverbs finds no problem at all to associate the teachings encapsulated in an Egyptian instruction, while at the same time emphatically identifying the God referred to in these teachings as Yahweh, the God revealed to Israel.

4.4.2.6   Proverbs 15:33

יִרְאַת יְהוָה מוּסַר חָכְמָה וְלִפְנֵי כָבוֹד עֲנָוָה׃

The fear of Yahweh, the instruction of wisdom
and before honour, humility.

What is most obviously attested to in this proverb is Proverbs' view that the fear of Yahweh and the instruction of wisdom are interrelated. In the proverbial world this interrelatedness is multi-directional, that is, the fear of Yahweh and the instruction of wisdom mutually influence each other in the life of a righteous-wise person. It is also multi-faceted, that is, the fear of Yahweh could be either (or all of the following): the source of, the beginning of, the right approach to or the result of the instruction of wisdom, and more (Heim 2001:205). Again, as in the previous proverb, the reader is encouraged to think and ponder over the content of the proverb. Through the terseness of the first colon, the reader is encouraged to contemplate the relation between the fear of Yahweh and the instruction of wisdom.

These are loosely connected to humility in the second colon. The fear of the Lord is by this connection being described in terms of humility that leads to honour. Thus, the sages sketch the fear of Yahweh and their teaching, that is, the instruction of wisdom, in terms of humility that leads to honour. This presents to the reader an assurance of the end result of the fear of the Lord and the instruction of wisdom. In the symbolic-textual world that is projected for the reader, the end result of the fear

of the Lord and the instruction of wisdom is the desirable value of honour. In this way, the reader is motivated toward accepting the instruction of wisdom and fearing the Lord in humility, in this way attaining the desirable value of honour.

In the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs humility and honour are not contradictory values and humility is prized as the way that leads to honour. Humility are said to be before, meaning both valued above honour, the core value in Ancient Near Eastern societies, as well as in the sense of a prerequisite that leads to honour.

4.5   Concluding remarks

By now the question: What then is the fear of the Lord?, can rightly be considered. The fear of the Lord-proverbs in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 constantly describe what the fear of Yahweh does, rather than what it is. This collection does not define it in a 'what is'-way but rather in a 'what it does'-way. The fear of Yahweh is given a functional definition in this collection, rather than an ontological one. It wants to persuade the reader to adhere to the fear of Yahweh. By vividly sketching how beneficial the fear of the Lord is in the symbolic-textual world referenced by the text, it illustrates the beneficial way in which the fear of the Lord functions in the life of a person that adheres to it.

The metaphoric language with which the proverbs reference the fear of Yahweh should not be read as the perimeter of the reference, but the ultimate reference is to point beyond the fear of Yahweh to God. Read with this ultimate reference in mind, Proverbs 10:1-15:33 use the expression 'the fear of Yahweh' to articulate the positive outcome (as concluded in chapter 3) of the fear of the Lord in the relationship between a person and Yahweh. The Lord is the guarantor of the benefits that the fear of Yahweh present to the reader and it is only within this positive relationship of adherence to the fear of the Lord, that the benefits become relevant for and applicable to a person.

The fear of Yahweh, and therefore Yahweh, increase the days of the righteous-wise, while it cuts short the years of the wicked-fool. It causes one to walk in uprightness, but a despiser of the Lord walks in crookedness. It provides safety; one may find in

it a trust of strength even for ones offspring and a source of life that keeps one far from the snares of death. It provides peace, even in circumstances of meagre provisions and is of greater value than a great storehouse, especially when that is accompanied by panic. The fear of the Lord, the instruction of wisdom leads through humility to the promise of honour. In this way, the fear of the Lord is sketched in its beneficial function in the life of a person, in order to persuade the reader to adhere to the fear of Yahweh and invite the reader into a fearing relationship with the Lord.

Chapter 5: Fusing the world of the text and the world of the reader

5.1   Introduction

What follows is the last stage of this hermeneutical enquiry: the appropriation of the text by the reader or fusion of the world of the text and the world of the reader. If the structuring of the text (explored in chapter 3) was aimed at projecting a world (explored in chapter 4), Reese ([1979] 1990:392), in accord with Ricoeur, concludes that "the chief task of its interpreters is to clarify the horizons of that world for modern readers." That is the aim of this chapter. This stage, the fourth pole of a Ricoeurian hermeneutic namely appropriation, highlights the dialogue function of the text and is the corresponding activity of the reader, that is parallel to the creativity of the author of the text and dialectically opposed to the first pole namely distanciation of a Ricoeurian hermeneutic (Reese [1979] 1990:387).

For Ricoeur, the intersection between the text and life engenders the imagination according to the Bible (Ricoeur 1981:3). He finds "*in* reading itself the key to the heuristic functioning of the productive imagination" of texts (Ricoeur 1981:2, author's italics). According to him, the act of reading should be seen as "the meeting point of the itineraries of meaning offered by the text as a production of fiction … and the free course (*parcours*) of meaning brought about by the reader seeking "to apply" the text to life" (Ricoeur 1981:2–3).

Ricoeur (in Reese [1979] 1990:387) sees the text as mediating the reader's self-understanding: "…it is the world of the text that 'finally forms and transforms the self of the reader according to its intention'". Hall (2006:198) describes it as follows: "To read the biblical texts is to participate in the redescription of reality initiated by the text and completed in the reader. What the texts offer to the imagination is, among other things, a moral redescription of reality." Brueggemann (1993:18–25) understands the Biblical text to be funding a counter-imagination of the world. "What shows itself is in each instance a proposed world, a world I may inhabit and wherein I can project my ownmost possibilities" (Ricoeur 1977:25). Thus, the hermeneutical appropriation of the text or the subjective, existential moment of personal decision ensues from the semantic moment of objective meaning (Pellauer 1981:267).

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Reese ([1979] 1990:395) states that "[o]bviously this dimension of the interpretive process will be the most personal, because each reader is confronted by the world of the text in a unique way." He points out the challenge of Ricoeur's hermeneutic: If it is only an 'I', an individual reader, that can project 'my' ownmost/utmost possibilities, does such a hermeneutic not run the risk of shattering the possibility of a universal hermeneutic, because it opens up an infinite number of subjective worlds (Reese [1979] 1990:386)? The elucidation of the challenge lies, for Ricoeur, in the task of generative semantics that is to discern the "world-propositions opened up by the references of the text" (Ricoeur in Reese [1979] 1990:386). This is what received attention in the previous chapter. Reese ([1979] 1990:387) explains that this world is the tenure of all who comprehend the text because discourse is to communicate meaning, while at the same time each reader's experience of this world is inimitable.

In the process of the hermeneutical appropriation of religious texts, Ricoeur's insistence that the specificity of religious language calls for discernment and commitment, is of importance (Pellauer 1981:280; Reese [1979] 1990:395). This commitment is what opens the reader to the itineraries of meaning offered by the text, in order to appropriate the text and apply it to his/her own life (Ricoeur 1981:14).

Ricoeur (in Reese [1979] 1990:394) states that "[f]aith is the attitude of the one who is willing to be interpreted as he interprets the text-world." Reese ([1979] 1990:394) comes to the conclusion that "readers appropriate the text only by placing themselves before it in positive dialogue by letting the text play upon them." This is in contrast to the reader trying to become contemporaneous to the time of the text or trying to submit the text to their own goals (Reese [1979] 1990:394). The goal of the reader is to make the issue at stake in the text, their own by opening themselves to the world it creates (Reese [1979] 1990:394). He continues: "Such an interchange takes place within the context of faith, absolute trust in the authority of the text to create new possibilities" (Reese [1979] 1990:394).

For Ricoeur (1975:107–145), religious language is a unique and eccentric form of poetic language, and not just one instance of it. In the words of Pellauer (1981:280), religious language "adds something to the common traits of the poem". It references

God and indicates the limit-possibilities of the reader's life and self-understanding and precisely herein lays its specificity. It does this by both an objective as well as a subjective reference, simultaneously. Pellauer (1981:280) explains that objectively the reference is to another world – the world of the text and beyond it towards God; yet one that can become the reader's own world. Subjectively it holds out the possibility of self-understanding to the reader – it points to the reader's limit-experiences in and through this world. Comprehending these two poles is the reference to God as a sort of convergence point which coordinates the whole (Pellauer 1981:280).

This last stage of the hermeneutical enquiry in a Ricoerian manner, that is, the appropriation of the text by the reader or self-understanding arising from the text (Reese [1979] 1990:387), coincides with the aim or illocutionary force of the text of Proverbs. The appropriation of the text by the reader or "mediation of the reader's self-understanding *through* the text" (Ricoeur in Reese [1979] 1990:387, author's italics) is what Proverbs aim at.

In the previous chapter several scholars' observation was noted that a symbolic-textual reference is at work within the book of Proverbs. It was there affirmed that this symbolic-textual world is a redescription of reality, that redescribe the actual world in terms of possibility (cf. Wallace 1995:12). In the words of Ansberry (2011:125) in Proverbs 10–24, a fundamental moral vision is presented to the reader that "(re)constructs the addressee's perception of reality and shapes his character." With Ansberry, a good many of the scholars that recognise the symbolic-textual reference at work in the text, also notice the shaping of the reader's character through this symbolic world (Frydrych 2002:32–37; Sandoval 2006:6; Fox 2007:684; Clifford 2009:243).

This happens on three levels. As a consequence there are three different horizons that come into consideration in this stage of the hermeneutical inquiry. The specific reference to the fear of Yahweh, with the fear of the Lord-proverbs dispersed throughout the collection, is part of the larger symbolic-textual world that Proverbs, as a whole, references for the reader. Bland (1998:228) concludes: "Thus in Proverbs, the anthropocentric focus and the theocentric foundation unite to

accomplish a common goal: instruction in the formation of moral character" (cf. Ansberry 2011:125). This is the first horizon that must be considered when the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs and the world of the contemporary reader enter into discussion.

There is, however, a second horizon that needs to be considered. The fear of the Lord-proverbs together invite the contemporary reader to consider the textual world of Proverbs with specific reference to the fear of Yahweh, that the reader is invited to inhabit as his/her own world. It is an invitation specifically in terms of the relationship between the reader and Yahweh.

Added to these two horizons are the specific horizons of the individual fear of Yahweh-proverbs. The proverbs in this section each reference their own horizon or kaleidoscopic view of the symbolic-textual world that calls the reader in each instance to a very specific response. On a practical level, Proverbs succeed in mediating the reader's self-understanding through each individual proverb, by fusing the horizon that the specific proverb references and that of the world of the reader. When these two fuse, the reader suddenly inhabits the symbolic world that the specific proverb constructs and projects for the reader.

In chapter 3, Clifford's (2004) description of the methods by which a proverb arrests the attention of the reader and asserts its authority was discussed in a short exposition on proverb poetics. Through formal or semantic features or a combination of both style and content, the proverb imposes itself on and engages the reader (Clifford 2004:155). In this way a fusion between the world of the text and the world of the reader is initiated and the reader is invited to inhabit this symbolic-textual world as his/her own world. When this world is inhabited as his/her own world, that is, when the text is appropriated by the reader, the reader comes to a new self-understanding through the text and the text succeeds in its aim to form and transform the self of the reader.

The considerations that follow should be seen in the light of all three of these horizons, though because of the chosen focus of this study, the accent will inevitably fall on the second and third.

5.2 The broader horizon of the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord in conversation with the world of the contemporary reader

The aim of the previous chapter was to describe the second order or transcendent reference of the text of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord or the "deeper reality" (Reese [1979] 1990:386) that the text points to. Now an explication of the sort of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text will be afforded attention. The symbolic-textual world described in the previous chapter will now be related to the world of the contemporary reader in order to discern the issue of the text and the new being that the text invites the modern-day reader to.

The following considerations, with regard to the identity of the contemporary reader, featured for the purposes of the study. As stated in chapter 1 the contemporary reader I have in mind is twofold and is the result of my own personal context. Firstly, I am the pastor of an Afrikaans-speaking congregation of the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa in Pinetown, South Africa, a small city just inland from the harbour city of Durban. Within this context I aim to minister the relevance of the Scriptures to congregants and community members that have a variety of frames of reference and are greatly affected by a large variety of influences.

The contemporary world view consists of pre-modern, modern and postmodern tendencies and consequently it is very difficult to formulate a workable identity without making broad generalisations. Due to the diversity of the modern-day society a particular individual reader's stance on specifically religious matters, that is relevant to the study for instance, may range over a wide spectrum, from a candid religious faith to an obdurate secular scepticism (cf. Tarnas [1991] 1996:285). The world view of Christian and non-Christian readers will in some instances be similar, and in some very different. It is, however, possible to discern some common tendencies and apply these for the purpose of this study, albeit in a very broad and general way. For this purpose the threefold movement within postmodern thought will serve as a general guide. Though not exhaustive of postmodern thought or of the influences affecting modern day readers of the Bible, the threefold movement

within postmodern thought gave me a workable description of some of the influences affecting modern-day readers of the Biblical text.

Secondly I am also, through this study, part of the academic community and would like to dialogue with other academic thinkers that may or may not be doing research or practicing theology of the same type as my own. With the considerations on the identity of the contemporary reader stated, the sort of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text as a result of the fusion of the world of the text and the world of the reader, or existential moment of personal decision that Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of Yahweh invites the modern-day reader to, can now be regarded.

The naming of Yahweh in the fear of Yahweh-proverbs immediately expands the world view to include the transcendent reality of God. It has already been mentioned that the presence, in the world, of Yahweh, the God of Israel, who is to be feared, is a datum for the sages (cf. Perdue 2000:36). In Proverbs, and especially so in the fear of Yahweh-sayings, God is simply accepted as being part of and involved in the world, though, as Boström (1990:144) notes, God is seen in Proverbs not to be bound by, or limited to, this world and its precincts.

According to Proverbs' view of the world, God is concerned with and involved in the world, attending to and having interest in both the human world and creation in general (Boström 1990:144). Consequently, the world can never be independent of God (Venter 1999:710). Frydrych (2002:83), in his study, confirms that the Lord is viewed by the sages as being inseparable from the world, through which God is known, and therefore the world can also not be understood apart from God (cf. Blocher 1977:23).

Conversely, the world view of the modern-day reader is predominantly secular, that is to say "disregarding God or the supernatural as an explanatory principle in understanding the world and as a normative principle in making moral decisions" (Deist [1984] 1990:230–231). Tarnas ([1991] 1996:285) describes the world view and understanding of God that dominated since the dawn of the modern era:

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> … the modern universe was an impersonal phenomenon, governed by regular natural laws, and understandable in exclusively physical and mathematical terms. God was now distantly removed from the physical universe, as creator and architect and was now … a supreme intelligence and first cause who established the material universe and its immutable laws and then withdrew from further directive action.

> (Tarnas [1991] 1996:285)

Even though a postmodern world view has more room for transcendent reality (Baron 2007:115–118), many contemporary readers, also Christian contemporary readers, because of the strong secular tendencies of contemporary society, regard religious considerations and beliefs, at best as mostly limited to the individual's subjective inner life or at worst obsolete and irrelevant especially in relation to the outer reality/world (Tarnas [1991] 1996:298–323). In such an environment, God is often experienced as being distant or absent and God's existence is frequently questioned. Venter (2006:1371) notes that believers within this environment are confronted with a choice, not necessarily in opposition to other religions but concerning atheism.

The impression of the world view of Proverbs that is expressed in and attested to by the fear of the Lord-proverbs, confronts the modern-day reader with Yahweh's presence and purposeful participation in the world. However, it does this not in terms of propositions, but rather in terms of an invitation. Reese ([1979] 1990:386) notes that religious texts "are in touch with the fulness [sic] of reality". Through the referencing of the transcendent reality of the symbolic world that the contemporary reader glimpses through the text, she/he is invited to broaden her/his own world view to include this reality.

However, it has to be noted that it is very significant that the deity referenced in the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 is very specifically Yahweh. Generic references to God, except as mentioned earlier in one possible case in Proverbs 14:9, are not used and God is exclusively referenced by the proper name Yahweh. This identifies the deity referenced very specifically as the God Yahweh revealed to

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Israel, and relates the symbolic world of Proverbs with that referenced by the rest of the Old Testament tradition (cf. Boström 1990:44).

The exclusivity of the monotheistic assertion of Proverbs does not appeal to the postmodern tendency towards relativism. Venter (2006:1371) describes the postmodern situation as hugely influenced by religious plurality with multiple faiths making numerous contrary and opposing truth claims. Consequently, the contemporary reader may show suspicion to any tradition that makes exclusive truth claims, especially if the individual's contribution in determining what will be normative, is limited.

Amidst the plurality of truth claims within contemporary society and the scepticism the contemporary reader might have to such exclusive claims as made in Proverbs, the international character of the proverbs presents a most constructive opportunity to engage the contemporary reader. The exclusivity of Proverbs' reference of specifically Yahweh has earlier in this study been shown to be significant, especially in light of the international character of Proverbs that share striking similarities in form, genre and content with other Ancient Near Eastern proverbial collections (cf. Boström 1990:9–10; Venter 1999:708; Aitkin 2001:406; Shupak 2005; Schwab 2009:455–456). This evidences the proverbial tradition's firm rootedness in Yahwistic faith, yet the fact that it is simultaneously, emphatically, universally appealing.

For Christian contemporary readers of Proverbs 10:1–15:33, this characteristic of Proverbs presents a training ground in remaining faithful, in the face of the radical plurality within contemporary society, to the truth claim that the one God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit engages contemporary persons, yet simultaneously being open to conversation with other traditions. This is possible only when the contemporary Christian, in line with the movement beyond foundations, acknowledges the culturally and socially embodied nature of knowledge. Only from within the Christian tradition the contemporary Christian can make a public truth claim that witnesses to a Reality which far transcends the tradition from which it arises (cf. Newbegin in Weston 2004:234).

Nel (2002:450) notes that proverbial knowledge is by no means less important because of the fact that it is gained from experience and observation and, in that sense, has not been directly revealed. This, for him, opens up the conversation with other traditions, when the fact is acknowledged that there is an abundance of knowledge surrounding the contemporary reader today, which might be regarded as wisdom of God's design. According to him, there exist repositories in the oral tradition and often suppressed voices of wisdom in the diverse cultural contexts of the contemporary society, waiting to be tapped and latched onto for the creation of a just society with its health restored.

Furthermore, the portrayal of the relationship with this very specific deity, Yahweh, in terms of the expression 'the fear of the Lord', that has earlier been shown to have a functional definition rather than an ontological one, invites the reader to embrace a specific deportment in relation to the Lord, one in which Yahweh is feared. Blocher (1977:7) points out several studies that "have shown conclusively that words deriving from the same root (here ירא) cannot always be given the same semantic breadth. So the participle נורא does mean "terrible" but the noun יראה never means "terror"; it is used in a weaker moral or religious sense."

Barré (1981:42) states that "[e]ssentially it represents the basic and proper stance of mortals before the divine" and notes that Ancient Near Eastern thought tended to be more concrete than abstract. Consequently, the relational stance of a person towards Yahweh was thought of very concretely in terms of how it is expressed in the life of a person, involving the full range of a person's responses to the deity from cultic to moral-ethical and more. This is especially evident from Proverbs 14:2, where the internal reality of the fear of Yahweh, or conversely, despise of the Lord, is rhetorically very closely linked to the external reality of a person's moral-ethical conduct.

The depiction of the relationship with the Lord in terms of the functional role it plays in the life of a person, underlines the consequential implications of this relationship with Yahweh in the life of the reader, either positive or negative. Within the collection of Proverbs 10:1–15:33, this is characterised predominantly in terms of the positive outcome that the fear of the Lord has for the person fearing Yahweh. The negative

consequential implications of a relationship with Yahweh that is not characterised by the fear of the Lord, finds expression in Proverbs 10:27, Proverbs 14:2 and possibly Proverbs 14:27 and Proverbs 15:16 where it is, in these two cases, not directly stated but implied. However, these proverbs consistently also state the converse positive consequences in a relationship with Yahweh that is characterised by the fear of the Lord. In this, the modern-day reader may find, in line with the movement towards the Other within postmodern thought – in this case towards the divine Other – an invitation to enter into a fearing relationship with the Lord.

The sages' understanding of the relationship with Yahweh that has negative consequences for those who do not fear the Lord is hugely overshadowed by the positive for those who do. It reminds of the imbalance in the Decalogue pronouncement in Exodus 20:5–6, that the iniquities of the fathers will be visited on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate the Lord, but that the showing of steadfast love will be to a thousand generations of those who love the Lord and keep the commandments. The negative consequences have to be stated, as for Proverbs, just as in the rest of the Old Testament, it is a very real and earnest warning that has to be considered, but the positive consequences represent the invitation that the text hopes the reader will accept. Together the negative and positive consequences nudge the reader toward accepting the text's invitation to enter into a fearing relationship with Yahweh.

This brings the next observation to the fore. The fear of Yahweh-proverbs in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 are mostly antithetical, with the exception of Proverbs 14:26 and Proverbs 15:33. It has been noted earlier that the antithetical structure of the proverbs is a literary expression of the book's understanding of the structure of the symbolic-textual world that is sketched by the proverbs (cf. Loader 1986:107–110). It evidences Proverbs' understanding of the human world as being bifurcated (Ansberry 2010:162) between the righteous-wise, who in terms of the above mentioned accepts the invitation of the text, and the wicked-fool that rejects it. These are in antithetical opposition to each other and for Proverbs there is no other category. A person can be categorised into one of the two categories: He/she is either a 1) righteous-wise person or a 2) wicked-fool.

It is easy to see that this bifurcated understanding of the human world could be perceived, by the contemporary reader, as restrictive and stereotyped. The fact that Proverbs makes little room for alternative categories can be offending to the modern-day reader, who generally regards reality as much more complex than such an uncomplicated division allows for (cf. Obelkevich in Hildebrandt 2005:59). However, when the paradigmatic character of Proverbs (Frydrych 2002:19) is taken into account, it becomes understandable that the book sketches the symbolic-textual world in this way.

According to Frydrych (2002:19), the enterprise reflected in Proverbs is paradigmatic. That is, it is understood by the book that the depiction of the world it offers is incomplete, but the possible error is considered of only limited significance under the specific circumstances. "The paradigm is constructed as a kaleidoscope, where the whole image of the world is constructed by a combination of the glimpses that the individual proverbs offer, and is more than a simple sum of the parts" (Frydrych 2002:43; cf. Murphy 1998:xxvi). The book offers understanding with a practical end in mind and the value of this understanding is in its practical application.

In conjunction with the paradigmatic character of Proverbs, when the aim or illocutionary force of the text of Proverbs is considered, that is, the appropriation of the text by the reader or "mediation of the reader's self-understanding *through* the text" (Ricoeur in Reese [1979] 1990:387, author's italics), it becomes even more evident that Proverbs' view of reality is a most effective supporting apparatus in the formation of the reader's moral character.

The symbolic-textual world of Proverbs confronts the contemporary reader with the question of her/his own position in terms of this world view. Through a confrontation of the reader with the bifurcated structure of the symbolic-textual world he/she is confronted with the reality of his/her own person. The reader is called to consider their own position with regard to the distinctive divide between the two categories, as well as with regard to Yahweh that is to be feared. This is especially evident in Proverbs 14:2 where the descriptive nature of the proverb seems simply to be making an observation. However, Hildebrandt (1992:436) notes that a naive reading

of the sentences in Proverbs 10–15 (e.g. 10:1, 4, 5) reveals that many of the sentences go beyond mere empirical observation, to being motivationally directive. When, for example, the two categories in Proverbs 14:2 are sketched with their accompanying internal and external realities that are contingent upon each other, the reader is left to consider their own position and come to a new self-understanding in relation to the Lord.

Considered in the light of the paradigmatic character and the illocutionary force of Proverbs, the appositeness of the proverbial perspective is highlighted. Edmondson (2005:342, author's italics) notes Von Rad's comparison of the Hebrew tradition's maxims to "small plots on the social and intellectual landscape, whose suitability *to a given purpose* can be measured against each other". According to Edmondson's understanding of Von Rad the maxims are not venturing exclusive truth claims because a maxim used to correct another claim does not demonstrate the falsity of the claim, but instead leads on to an additional perspective. When considered in this light, the proverbial perspective, instead of being offending, can be appreciated as the proverbs are seen not to be stating dogmatised, absolute, universal truths, but rather find their authority within the context in which it is applied. This is in line with the movement beyond totalities within postmodern thought.

The view on the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of Yahweh portrayed thus far, can summarily be described as a world in which the monotheistic God, Yahweh, is assumed to be present and active. The contemporary reader is invited into a relationship with God, that is characterised by the fear of Yahweh. This is a deportment that is conceived of very concretely in terms of how it is expressed in a person's response to the invitation. The response to the invitation divides the human world into two distinct categories, 1) the righteous-wise that fear the Lord and 2) the wicked-fools that do not.

5.3   The individual kaleidoscopic horizons of the fear of Yahweh-proverbs in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 in conversation with the world of the contemporary reader

When this re-described view of reality is embraced by the modern-day reader it calls the contemporary reader to an existential moment of personal decision that has very real consequences. Both the decision and the consequences are outlined in the individual fear of Yahweh-proverbs. Hildebrandt (2005:62) proposes that the power and potential of the collected proverb can be unleashed in the particular story of the contemporary individual.

5.3.1 Proverbs 10:27

יִרְאַת יְהוָה תּוֹסִיף יָמִים וּשְׁנוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּקְצֹרְנָה׃

The fear of Yahweh will cause to increase days
but the years of the wicked will be shortened.

In Proverbs 10:27 the contemporary reader is invited to consider the consequences of his/her response to Yahweh. The fact that the root of תִּקְצֹרְנָה, קצר, may also be read as meaning to reap the harvest, points the reader in this direction. In the world view that the proverbs sketch and invite the contemporary reader to embrace, Yahweh is a determining factor to be reckoned with. This is in stark contrast to the contemporary tendency towards indifference with regard to God as noted above in the discussion on the secularity of the contemporary world view.

The consideration should be done in the light of the future expectancy denoted by the imperfect form of the verbs תּוֹסִיף (will cause to increase) and תִּקְצֹרְנָה (will be shortened). These have earlier been noted to depict a stable, predictable – though not deterministic – world, in which the outcome of attitudes and behaviours can be calculated. Nel (2002:439) notes that a mere intuitive reading of the proverbial sayings suggests that a perception of a natural cause or order of things is subjacent to them, of which the consistency is such, that predictions about the outcome of conduct may safely be made. He adds that the inquiring and observing mind is capable of making these inferences.

However, according to Nel, this does not in itself constitute ethics. Ethics, he states, rely on precepts and advice of the right or valued path. "The sayings and the advice

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of wisdom can therefore only be of value if the presupposed order or design has a normative value in the sense that it justifies reference to it as the ideal or required pattern of behaviour, social conduct and piety" (Nel 2002:439). Loader (2004:433) asserts that "the synthetic world-view of Israel's wisdom tradition did not allow for the division of reality into compartments." It, therefore, didn't differentiate between human perception of empirical reality on the one hand and faith in a God sustaining this reality on the other and could develop a canon of virtues that was determined by both command, as a matter of revelation, and advice, as a matter of reason.

In combination with the causative, indicated by the hiph'il stem formation תּוֹסִיף (will cause to increase), which hints at divine activity, the future expectancy emphasise the active involvement of Yahweh in the world and the life of a person. Hildebrandt notes:

> The proverbial statements demonstrate that appearances may be deceiving. People may plan their way – making what appear to be self-determining choices – but the ultimate guarantee of the final outcomes are somehow chimerically beyond reach. Proverbs raise one's vision to the fear of the LORD and at the same time call one to responsible action in planning one's way but always with the humble realization that there is a providential hand guiding, caring for and ultimately determining the final outcomes.

<div align="right">(Hildebrandt 2005:62)</div>

The proverb's directing of the reader to consider his/her response to the Lord is at the same time an invitation to adhere to the fear of Yahweh, that is here antithetically opposed to wickedness. The positive consequence that the fear of Yahweh has, תּוֹסִיף יָמִים (will cause to increase days), acts as a positive motivation and invitation to find in the fear of Yahweh a safeguard against wickedness and the consequential shortening of years that flows from it. The severity of the negative consequences of wickedness is expressed in וּשְׁנוֹת ... תִּקְצֹרְנָה (the years … will be shortened) and acts as a negative motivation away from wickedness. The proverb reminds the modern-day reader that a neutral stance toward the Lord is not a possibility, as there is a contingent relationship between wickedness and not fearing Yahweh. It reminds the reader that it is only in a fearing relationship with the Lord that a person is regarded

as righteous, the opposite of wicked, that is implied by the antithetical opposition of the fear of Yahweh and the wicked.

A last observation may be made. In the context of contemporary society's, almost unbalanced, concern for longevity through physical health, the proverb addresses the narrowing of an understanding of life that is limited to physical matters and excludes spiritual or religious matters. The proverb attests to the fullness of life, both qualitatively as well as a quantitatively, that is to be found in adherence to the fear of the Lord, that leads to an enhancement or increase of life. Conversely, it cautions about the risk in not adhering to this spiritual principle that leads to a reduction of life.

5.3.2 Proverbs 14:2

הוֹלֵךְ בְּיָשְׁרוֹ יְרֵא יְהוָה וּנְלוֹז דְּרָכָיו בּוֹזֵהוּ׃

Walker in his straightness fearer of Yahweh
but goer on his wrong ways despiser of him.

Proverbs 14:2, through the indeterminacy of the subject and predicate, expresses Proverbs' conviction of the congruency between the external and internal realities of a person's life. The proverb attests to the interconnectedness of the external reality of a person's moral-ethical conduct and the internal reality of her/his bearing towards Yahweh. According to the understanding of the proverb, these cannot be segregated and instead permeate each other to become the motivation of the path a person chooses; a metaphor for the life choices that a person makes.

In this way the proverb urges the contemporary reader to embrace Yahweh and in this light to reflect on the congruent relationship between the internal and external realities of his/her own life. The reader is challenged to consider in what way their moral-ethical conduct reflects their bearing towards God and in what way their bearing towards God is determinative of her/his moral-ethical conduct. The proverbs call for a total engagement in the choices of the moment, but set these within a context of the Other (both human and divine) thereby establishing the context for

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significance and meaning of the choices made by each individual "I" (cf. Hildebrandt 2005:62).

Hildebrandt (2005:61) notes the postmodern tendency to focus on the uniqueness of each decision and the resultant embracing of a politically corrected relativism. In this light, the proverb cautions against the danger of a utilitarian relativising of moral-ethical standards in terms only of the demands of the external situation, instead of upholding principles in terms of the internal condition that the fear of Yahweh compels.

Nel (2002:450) affirms that "the rhetorics of wisdom reminds us today that responsible ethics … derives its motivation from a hatred of evil as a destructive force and the desire to avoid evil in all its overt and concealed forms. Evil is subtle and seductive as Pr[overbs – my insertion] 7 seeks to explain, and therefore requires the knowledge of the wise to reveal its destructive paths leading to death." The proverb calls the contemporary reader to a personal decision; will he/she walk in straightness in the fear of Yahweh or despising Yahweh go on wrong ways?

5.3.3 Proverbs 14:26 and 27

בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה מִבְטַח־עֹז וּלְבָנָיו יִהְיֶה מַחְסֶה׃

In the fear of Yahweh the trust of strength
and for his sons he will be a place of refuge.

יִרְאַת יְהוָה מְקוֹר חַיִּים לָסוּר מִמֹּקְשֵׁי מָוֶת׃

The fear of Yahweh the source of life
to keep far from the snares of death.

Proverbs 14:26 and 27 can be read together as both proclaim the security and safety that is to be found in the fear of Yahweh.

With regard to Proverbs 14:26, Hildebrandt (2005:61) observes that it is with great interest that those studying intelligence are seeing the importance of foundational

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values and ethics in the formulation of wisdom in the later stages of life (cf. Edmondson 2005). In this sense, the proverb's claim that the fear of Yahweh provides a trust of strength, can better be understood. In the symbolic world that Proverbs projects for the reader, Yahweh is the guarantor of the order in the world and ultimately also guarantees the consequential outcomes that can be expected. When the fear of Yahweh is a foundational value and determinative of a person's life and ethics, according to Proverbs, it will go well with that person as she/he conforms to the order established by the Lord (Venter 1999:710). In this sense, the contemporary reader may find in the fear of Yahweh a trust of strength and is invited to make a personal commitment to adhere to it to his/her own benefit.

The beneficiality, however, also spills over even to the next generation. The proverb is unclear as to how this happens and even remains unclear as to the subject of the second colon. Is the 'he' that will be a place of safety (יִהְיֶה מַחְסֶה) for his sons, Yahweh or the contemporary reader that embraces the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs and accordingly the fear of Yahweh, or both? The proverb suggests that when the fear of Yahweh is a foundational value in the life of a family it functions as a very real trust of strength and place of refuge and the contemporary reader is invited to embrace the proverb's perspective to the mutual benefit of self and one's children.

To this can be added Nel's (2002:448) conclusion that the ultimate value of wisdom is not the recognition of the created order or empirical regularities, but that the value of wisdom is its instruction towards the discovery of ultimate life. "In this purpose the ethics of wisdom finds its motivation, because it instructs the kind of life that is fulfilment of what Yahweh expects and warrants. It is therefore quite significant that when the fear of Yahweh is predicated or treated as an agent, it ensures life or adds to its span" (Nel 2002:448). This is evident from Proverbs 14:26 and 27 as well as Proverbs 10:27. Therefore Nel (2002:450) concludes that the rhetorics of wisdom reminds the contemporary reader that there is both an individual and communal responsibility to take into consideration the metaphysic and divine design with regards to human destiny, and to realise that the fear of the Lord is ultimately מְקוֹר חַיִּים (the fountain of life).

5.3.4 Proverbs 15:16

טֹוב־מְעַט בְּיִרְאַת יְהֹוָה מֵאֹוצָר רָב וּמְהוּמָה בֹו׃

Better a little in the fear of Yahweh
than a great storehouse and panic in it.

In Proverbs 15:16 the disjointed form of the proverb engages the reader in an assessment of the worth of the generally accepted value of wealth. The value or worth of commodities is questioned in light of the fear of Yahweh and evaluated against the backdrop of the effect or result it has in the life of a person. מֵאֹוצָר רָב (a great storehouse) is a symbol or metaphor of wealth, that was in the ancient world as greatly prized as it is in modern-day society. However, the proverb questions the worth of wealth if it is obscured by the panic that results from it or if it is gained by a lack of the fear of the Lord.

Through binary opposition, the proverb creates inversion and even subversion (cf. Nel 2002:444). With the accepted values subverted, the proverb presents to the contemporary reader a new set of values to live by. These are the values of the symbolic-textual world in which ultimate worth is found in the fear of Yahweh. That is why the proverb can declare: Rather a little in the fear of the Lord than a great storehouse and panic in it.

Nel (2002:450) notes that the rhetorics of wisdom remind the contemporary reader that responsible ethics "is rational and relies on sharp empiric observance of what is beneficial to the individual and society. The available knowledge should be weighed to see if it is wisdom. It appeals to logic and rationality, and includes the intellectual effort to work out the way forward in terms of the conditions and the desired order" (Nel 2002:450). Hildebrandt (2005:62) notes that "Proverbs deny helplessness by encouraging human development by making responsible choices that matter and have real consequences and by giving practical substance to what it means to trust in God by moving beyond the folly of the ego-centricism of "I"".

Hildebrandt (2005:61) observes the postmodern tendency to complexity, in which proverbial statements can be trivialised as being from a former age of naiveté and innocence and seen not to be relevant to the modern-day complexities. However, according to him, "the proverbial ideal-confirming and disconfirming stance … have the potential of reintroducing and inculcating values that may be necessary for the development of higher order thinking and even beyond that to the wisdom of common sense" (Hildebrandt 2005:61) that is effectively expressed in the proverb.

The contemporary reader is invited to assess his/her own set of values and to embrace the alternative valuing of the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 in which greater worth is assigned to מְעַט בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה (the little that is enjoyed in the fear of Yahweh) than to אוֹצָר רָב (a great storehouse/great wealth) that is obscured by the panic that may accompany it.

5.3.5 Proverbs 15:33

יִרְאַת יְהוָה מוּסַר חָכְמָה וְלִפְנֵי כָבוֹד עֲנָוָה׃

The fear of Yahweh, the instruction of wisdom
and before honour, humility.

With regard to Proverbs 15:33's assertion of the interrelatedness of the fear of Yahweh and the instruction of wisdom in the context of humility, Nel (2002:440) deems it noteworthy that the concept 'the fear of the Lord' appears in the older wisdom to emphasis the confines of human wisdom and to indicate that God is its ultimate limit. This understanding of wisdom is contrary to the high regard that contemporary society has for reason and rationality (cf. Tarnas [1991] 1996:311).

But although Proverbs has a different view on the limitations of human reasoning, it has this in common with the modern-day scientific venture, that it can be seen as an intellectual project. Nel sites Fox's 1993 study of the lexical meaning of words for wisdom in which he concluded that "wisdom is an intellectual capacity or *faculty* to perform mental actions, as well as a mental *activity* to know, understand and even to deliberate the execution of correct decisions" (Nel 2002:443, author's italics). He

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observes that older wisdom was gleaned from experience and close observation and that in this respect wisdom is nothing other than knowledge gained inductively from experience and observation. Loader (2004:422) also notes how virtue in Proverbs is "arrived at inductively from empirical observation of reality and not deductively by inference from a grand principle such as revelation." Furthermore, according to Nel, "[w]isdom was an attempt to systematize the results of observation and experience as an aggregate of meaning in terms of which one could find one's way in this world" (Nel 2002:443).

Thus, when the proverb identifies the fear of Yahweh and humility as the context for instruction of wisdom, it "does not reject an empiric and natural alliance" (Nel 2002:443). Nel (2002:450) concludes that the rhetorics of wisdom reminds the contemporary reader of the limits of empirical knowledge and ultimately, humbly, relies on wisdom which is the true knowledge of God. Responsible ethics admits its position of trust, for ultimately it is the trust in God or fear of the Lord that opens the eyes to real wisdom. "Wisdom's rhetorics denies any form of secular ethics devoid of trust in the Lord" (Nel 2002:450). Loader (2004:427) concludes of Proverbs 15:33 that "[t]his confirms the interpretation of the Fear of God as discipline מוסר that leads to wisdom."

5.4 A possible meaning of the fear the Lord for contemporary readers of the Bible according to Proverbs 10:1–15:33

Now an effort will be made to describe a possible understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord for contemporary readers that was inferred during the reading of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with a Ricoeurian hermeneutical approach. What does it mean for a person living in the postmodern environment to fear the Lord? An attempt will be made to answer this question.

In his 1981 article titled 'Fear of God and the world view of wisdom' Barré (1981:43) asks: "What does such a picture of reality, a part of our Judeo-Christian tradition, have to say for men and women of the twentieth century? Certainly we cannot be expected to go back to the world view of the first or second millennium BC." His

conclusion is significant and very relevant to this study. He reckons that although contemporary readers cannot see the world as the scribes did, "as believers in God we can and do share some fundamental aspects of that viewpoint" (Barré 1981:43).

The symbolic-textual world of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord indicates to the contemporary reader those fundamental aspects. The fear of Yahweh-sayings of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 points the contemporary reader to the relationship with the Lord that is as fundamental to the contemporary reader's life, as it is to the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs.

It has already been noted in the previous section that the fear of Yahweh-sayings in Proverbs, with their functional definition, operates in terms of an invitation to enter into the fear of the Lord. The symbolic-textual world constructed by the text, presents the contemporary reader of Proverbs with an alternative "model of apprenticeship" to the God that is identified in the text (Wallace 2000:304–305) and consequently an alternative mode of being-in-the-world that unfolds in front of the text (Ricoeur 1977:29–30).

This alternative mode of being-in-the-world includes the possibility of a relationship with Yahweh. The relationship with the Lord is commended to the contemporary reader without explanation, simply as a datum, for Yahweh's presence and involvement in the world is merely assumed. However, the book's confidence in recommending a fearing relationship with Yahweh is situated in the dynamic of the experience of the Other within the fearing relationship with the Lord. The functional evaluation of a fearing relationship with Yahweh is advocated, as the value thereof, which can be tested in life experience, is perceived by the text. Proverbs invites the reader to embrace the symbolic-textual world that the text projects for the reader and to test for themselves its assertion, by entering into the fear of the Lord and experiencing the positive consequences of it.

It has to be noted that the object of the fear of the Lord is, for Proverbs, very specifically Yahweh. It has often been noted throughout this study that it is very specifically Yahweh, the God revealed to Israel, that is to be feared. The fear of the Lord entails a relationship specifically with Yahweh and a commitment to this

relationship amid the claims of other religious traditions. As the book of Proverbs is part of the Christian canon, for the Christian contemporary reader it implies a relationship with the God revealed in Jesus Christ. This specificity, however, need not exclude the person that embraces the fear of the Lord from engaging other sources of wisdom. As the book of Proverbs shares form and content with other Ancient Near Eastern wisdom writings, yet remains committed to Yahweh specifically, in the same way the contemporary reader can engage other traditions, both in interdisciplinary dialogue as well as modern and ancient wisdom traditions, and yet remain loyal to his/her own relational commitment to Yahweh.

The fear of the Lord-proverbs emphasise the positive function that the fear of Yahweh has in the life of a person. They invite the contemporary reader to enter into a fearing relationship with the Lord and experience for themselves the benefit portending in the fear of Yahweh. The negative consequences of a lack of the fear of Yahweh are also spelled out and. Although largely overshadowed by the positive, the negative have the same function as the positive; both nudge the reader toward accepting the invitation to enter into the fear of the Lord. Accepting the invitation to fear the Lord encompasses a person's whole existence, but in terms of the investigated proverbs it implies at least two things for the contemporary reader.

Firstly, the fear of the Lord is to reckon with, or to take Yahweh into account. A person that fears the Lord weighs his/her actions, because they are in relation to Yahweh and understand that within this relationship there is accountability. Proverbs 10:27 declares that the fear of Yahweh will be the cause of an increase of days, but that the years of the wicked will be shortened. The proverb invites the modern-day reader of the text to enter into a fearing relationship with Yahweh, or to reckon with the Lord, find favour from Yahweh for doing so and consequently to experience the positive outcome. The proverb also reminds the reader that a lack of the fear of the Lord is similarly, though negatively and severely, rejoined and the negative consequences needs to be considered or weighed up.

Fearing or reckoning with the Lord is not limited to calculating external behaviour, but concern both the internal and external realities of a person. This is shown especially in Proverbs 14:2: Walker in his/her straightness, fearer of Yahweh, but goer on

her/his wrong ways, despiser of him. It has been noted earlier in this study that the internal disposition of fear or despise of Yahweh and the external reality of a person's moral-ethical behaviour, that is metaphorically expressed with the way that a person is taking, is contingent upon each other and reinforces each other. The one is both the cause and the outcome of the other, simultaneously. Thus, the contemporary reader is challenged by the proverb to assess their moral ethical behaviour in the light of the relationship with the Lord.

To fear or to reckon with Yahweh, both in inner attitude as well as in external behaviour, involves humility. For the contemporary reader, as for readers of any time, it is to be open to the instruction of wisdom and to appropriate the text by embracing the symbolic-textual world constructed by the text. Proverbs 15:33 pronounces: The fear of the Lord, the instruction of wisdom, and before honour, humility. To receive the instruction of wisdom and fear Yahweh requires humility, but with the promise that it will lead to honour.

Humility links the two implications of the fear of the Lord for a modern-day reader with each other. It brings the second implication of the meaning of the fear of the Lord for a contemporary reader into consideration. The fear of Yahweh is to trust the Lord and express this trust in practical actions. Fear of the Lord is to place one's trust in the Lord, to reckon Yahweh as the source of all that is good and trust the Lord for providing that which is good. It is to seek in the relationship with Yahweh the sole source of good in the face of contending sources that promise to supply what it considers to be good.

This is, in the explored proverbs, in terms of security, safety, sustenance and peace. Proverbs 14:26 states that in the fear of the Lord, the trust of strength and for his/her children a place of refuge. Proverbs 14:27 declares the fear of the Lord to be the source of life, to keep far from the snares of death. In these two proverbs the contemporary reader is encouraged to seek in the fear of the Lord security, safety and sustenance. The contemporary reader, when placing their trust in the Lord, will find that the fear of the Lord has the ability to keep him/her secure, safe and sustained, that is, far from the snares of death. That is why, according to Proverbs 15:16, a little in the fear of Yahweh is better than a great storehouse and panic in it.

It is not the great storehouse, that is, riches and profit, whether legitimately acquired or gained at any cost (that is the presumed cause of the panic in the proverb), that is the source of good, but a modern-day person will find in the fear of the Lord all that she/he needs and be satisfied with it.

In conclusion, the fear of the Lord is contra-intuitive, as fear normally resembles something negative. This can be especially so for the modern-day reader when the relationship with God is expressed in terms of fear. But in the fear of Yahweh-proverbs of Proverbs 10:1–15:33, fear in relation to the Lord is construed predominantly in positive terms. There is also a serious warning against the negative consequences of a lack of the fear of Yahweh, but the warning together with the assertion of the positive worth of the fear of the Lord, serves to convince the reader to accept the invitation to enter into the fear of the Lord and experience for themselves the positive outcome that it portends. All of this brings the contemporary reader before a conscious decision, either to appropriate and embrace as their own, or to reject the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs and the invitation to enter into the fear of the Lord.

Lastly, Hildebrandt (2010:11) notes A W Tozer's "caution that it is not enough to simply define a theological concept but one must know its meaning in life experience." To this end, the fear of Yahweh-proverbs of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 invites the contemporary reader to commit to integrating the fear of the Lord, in all of its diversity into every aspect of his/her existence (cf. Hildebrandt 2010:11). The fear of the Lord is a practical matter and finds, in relation to the Lord, expression in terms of both a person's approach to life and how a person lives one's life practically.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and thesis

6.1   Introduction

At the onset of this study in chapter 1, the necessity was indicated to consider a reading of the Biblical text that can do justice to the claims of the Church about the Bible's authority, yet can remain relevant to the postmodern culture's anti-authoritative sentiments. It was intimated that a Ricoeurian hermeneutic, that is, an investigation into the functioning of "poetic discourse" (Ricoeur 1977:22) that reads the text of the Bible with an eye towards the symbolic world that the text constructs for its readers (cf. Sandoval 2006), might aid such a reading. Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord served as a case study.

The aim then of this study was twofold. Firstly, to bring together hermeneutics and wisdom literature by testing a reading strategy that can do justice to Scriptural authority, yet also board the anti-authoritative sentiments of postmodern thought. This was set out in chapters 3–5. Secondly, in the process of testing this reading strategy on Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord, a possible understanding was inferred of the concept of the fear of the Lord for contemporary readers.

A review of all the considerations that was taken into account in order to achieve these aims will now be made, in order to state the thesis and resultant findings or conclusion of this study.

6.2   Review of hermeneutical influences

The following hermeneutical influences, set out in chapter 2, contributed to setting the stage for this hermeneutical enquiry. Heitink (1993:175) describes the hermeneutical issue as probably the most far-reaching question of our time. Thus, this study explored this question in connection to the interpretation of wisdom literature and in particular Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with specific reference to the fear of the Lord.

This study aimed at a philosophical hermeneutical approach and it is within this broader understanding of philosophical hermeneutics that this study operated. Hermeneutics represents more of an attitude or deportment than a method (Thiselton 2009:2). This was the constant point of departure for this study. The distinction between rules and methods on the one hand, and principles, attitudes and conditions on the other, relates to the two dimensions of hermeneutics namely the German words *Erklärung* (explanation) and *Verstehen* (understanding) (Thiselton 2009:9). These came into consideration in chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

The threefold movement within postmodern thought was a determining aspect of this study. According to Walter Brueggemann (1993:vii), "[t]here can be little doubt that we are in a wholly new interpretive situation" that is known as postmodern. In recent years, postmodern thought has been paving the way for a new understanding of rationality (Johnson 2003:110) and many scholars have been exploring the opportunities that this shift may hold for Biblical interpretation and theology.

Johnson (2003) identified a threefold movement within postmodern thought that can be described as a movement beyond foundations, beyond totality and toward the Other, that was helpful in the task of considering the opportunity that the new interpretive situation presents modern day readers of the Bible, to read and interpret the Scriptures in a fresh way. The concept of the fear of the Lord, as it is found in Proverbs 10:1–15:33, served as a case study to explore the interpretive opportunities that postmodern thought presents to the contemporary reader of the text.

Brueggemann (2003:xi) notes that the emergence of newer approaches to and methods of text interpretation in Old Testament study, that stand alongside historical criticism, have made a difference for the way in which the Old Testament may be accessed as a source and norm for faith. He understands imagination to be the vehicle for interpretation (Brueggemann 2002:19) and believes that the Biblical text both embodies and insists on ongoing work of imaginative interpretation (Brueggemann 2003:xii).

Ricoeur (1976:90) defines the hermeneutic task in terms of the quality of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text as the reference of the text. This study explored the interpretive contribution that a reading of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 with an eye toward the working of the text based on the semiotic of the text, namely with an eye towards the unfolding world in front of the text, may make to an understanding, for contemporary readers, of the concept of the fear of the Lord within the text.

Biblical literature "is not merely descriptive of a commonsense world; it dares, by artistic sensibility and risk-taking rhetoric, to posit, characterise and vouch for a world beyond the 'common sense'" in which Yahweh is the defining character (Brueggemann 2003:9). When interpreting Scripture, the reader stands in this same line of risk-taking imaginative engagement, reading the text with an eye towards the world beyond the 'common sense' that the text conceives, portrays and vouches for.

Ricoeur finds "*in* reading itself the key to the heuristic functioning of the productive imagination" of texts (Ricoeur 1981:2, author's italics). According to him, the act of reading should be seen as the meeting point of the itineraries of meaning, offered by the text as a production of fiction … and the free course of meaning brought about by the reader seeking "to apply" the text to life (Ricoeur 1981:2–3). The intersection between the text and life engenders the imagination according to the Bible (Ricoeur 1981:3).

It is on the level of the sentence, from where discourse ensues, that the inner or immanent constitutions of the sense are related to the outer or transcendent intention of the reference (Ricoeur 1976:22). Thus, every written discourse can be investigated in terms of both its internal organisation – its sense – which makes it a message, which can be identified and reidentified, and its referential intention – its reference – which is its pretention to say something about something (Ricoeur 1976:66). Both the internal organisation of the relevant proverbs, as well as their referential intention came into consideration within this study.

Sandoval (2006:6) points out three aspects of Ricoeur's work on metaphor that is suggestive for studying the discourse in Proverbs:
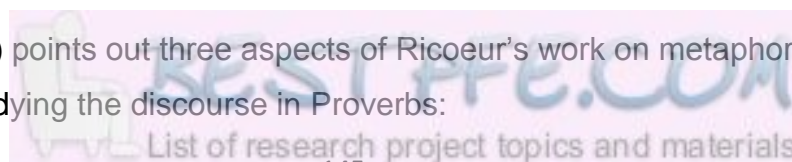
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1) Ricoeur offers a helpful model of how metaphors work.

2) He suggests that a literary text opens up a view of a possible world that eclipses the tangible, objective world – a view that can be said to correspond to the patterns of value and meaning that might be discerned in a particular discourse.

3) He indicates how a text, which may not initially appear metaphorical, might reveal certain aspects of metaphoricity.

This was utilised with specific reference to the fear of the Lord in Proverbs 10:1–15:33.

6.3   Review of the Ricoeurian hermeneutic used

A Ricoeurian hermeneutic was applied in the reading of the text in order to come to a possible understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord for contemporary readers. In his hermeneutical studies, Ricoeur organises his considerations around four poles that operated as guidelines for this study – distanciation, objectification, projecting of a world and appropriation. If the structuring of the text (this was explored in chapter 3) was aimed at projecting a world (this was explored in chapter 4), Reese ([1979] 1990:392), in accord with Ricoeur, concludes that the main task of an interpreter of a text, is to clarify the horizons of that symbolic-textual world for modern readers (this was explored in chapter 5). In this thesis each of these considerations was applied to Proverbs 10:1–15:33 to facilitate an exploration of the symbolic-textual world projected for the reader in this literature.

Distanciation entails the emancipation of the message of a written text, which is a distinctive kind of discourse, as differentiated from speech, from the intentional horizon of its author and initial communicative setting. In this study, this consideration lead to a reader oriented reading strategy with the focus on formulating a possible understanding of the fear of the Lord for contemporary readers.

Objectification implies the mode of discourse of the text as a means of production. The message of the text cannot be severed from its vehicle and consequently it is imperative to be conscious of the linguistic system of a text in order to grasp the kinds of meaning and representations of reality that are made possible by that

particular rhetorical vehicle. In this study, these considerations lead in chapter 3 to the question of the significance of reading Proverbs as poetry. The crafting of Proverbs as a work of art is an "urgent invitation to a profound life of faith" (Reese [1979] 1990:391) and the discourse calls for response.

The projection of a symbolic world by the text for the reader is the consequence of the text's meaning as both sense and reference. The text's 'meaning as sense' was distinguished through a semantic enquiry (language as *lingue*) or the 'what is said' according to Ricoeur in chapter 3. In chapter 4, the 'meaning as reference', distinguished on the level of semiotics (language as *parole*) or the 'about what it is said' according to Ricoeur, was distinguished. On this second level, the text references a symbolic-textual world that is a redescription of reality. This was, in terms of this study, considered with specific reference to the fear of Yahweh in Proverbs 10:1–15:33.

Appropriation or the self-understanding arising from the text is the last stage of a hermeneutical inquiry in a Ricoeuerian manner. Through a fusion of the world of the text and the world of the reader, the reader is invited to inhabit this projected symbolic-textual world. The hermeneutical appropriation of the text or the subjective, existential moment of personal decision ensues from the semantic moment of objective meaning (Pellauer 1981:267). This study, in chapter 5, probed this invitation in terms of the threefold movement within postmodern thought.

6.4   Review of the question of reading Proverbs as prose or poetry

The question of reading Proverbs as prose or poetry was considered. It was necessary to consider the genre of Proverbs, because as Alter (1985:4) observes, it is important to comprehend the linguistic system being used in a text in order to understand what kinds of meaning – what representations of human and divine reality – are made possible by the particular rhetorical vehicle. The premise of this study was that Proverbs, and in particular the proverbs relevant to this study, may best be read as poetry. This premise is grounded in five suppositions:

1) The dividing line between prose and poetry is not so clear cut, but this does not mean that there is no differentiation between the two (Burden 1986:57; Petersen & Richards 1992:13–14).

2) Parallelism in prose, as in poetry, is the sign of the poetic function (Landy 1984:78, also Berlin [1985] 1992:9) within Biblical texts.

3) Proverbs stresses the presupposition that wisdom is a language craft (Alter 1985:168): It uses the resources of poetic expression to achieve a fuller apprehension of its subject (Alter 1985:183).

4) Poetry is a special way of imagining the world (Alter 1985:205) which Proverbs use to reference the symbolic world that the wisdom scribes envision for their readers through the text.

5) The connection between metaphoric play and poetry provides an important key to understanding Proverbs as poetry (cf. Williams [1987] 1990:275).

6.5   Review of methodological considerations

The following methodological considerations were key to this research. The approach of this study was a literary one and as this study wanted to come to an understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord within Proverbs 10:1–15:33 for modern day readers, a reader oriented method of Biblical analysis was followed. The idea was to accomplish a reading of the fear of Yahweh-proverbs that can be relevant for contemporary readers.

Toward this aim, this study investigated the poetics of the relevant proverbs in Proverbs 10:1–15:33. As such, this study was interested in the text in its present shape and took a synchronic approach, not giving attention to diachronic considerations. Thus, the central concern of this study was not with the text *per se* but with a possible understanding of the concept of the fear of the Lord that the text communicates to the reader (cf. Frydrych 2002:6). The main tradition followed was that of 𝔐 but not to the extent of ignoring the nature of the formation and transmission of ancient texts (cf. Frydrych 2002:6). For the purposes of this study, the text of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* was sufficient (cf. Sandoval 2007:457–459; Human 1999:362).

In the translation strategy, the "grammatical principle" (MacArthur 2005) was helpful in illuminating the meaning of the text. A more literal style of translating the proverbs was followed, even to the point of awkwardness (cf. Alter 1985:32). The presupposition of this study was that ambiguity or double meanings in interpretation need not be avoided, but may even contribute to understanding the symbolic richness of the text. A more literal translation of the proverbs does not imply a literal interpretation of the text and this study undertook a reading attentive of the symbolic aspects of the relevant proverbs in the text of Proverbs (cf. Sandoval 2006:67).

The different contexts of the proverbs were considered when discerning the workings and meanings of the proverbs:

1) The performance context is largely lost in the case of Proverbs but can still be inferred from the content of the proverb (Sandoval 2006:14).
2) The historical context of the time of its composition from which Proverbs draw on illustrations to convey principles and truths.
3) The setting of the book as a whole within the rest of the canon.
4) The immediate literary context of individual proverbs.

With regard to the literary context, the premise of this study was that the primary source of meaning is the individual proverb; the nature of which is to be self-contained and thus understood independently (Frydrych 2002:8; Clifford 1999:108; also cf. Heim 2001:18). However, the literary context that add certain additional nuances to the interpretation of an individual proverb was also taken into account as the whole of Proverbs is most definitely more than the sum of its parts (Frydrych 2002:8; Gottwald [1985] 1987:564).

6.6   Review of the procedure followed in this study

The following procedure was followed. After an exposition of the hermeneutical influences and the methodological and procedural considerations in chapter 2, chapter 3 concentrated on explanation, or the 'what is said' according to Ricoeur. Chapter 4 focused on understanding and explored the referential intention of those proverbs identified in chapter 3 or the 'about what it is said' according to Ricoeur. Chapter 5 explored the appropriation of the text by the reader and formulated a

possible understanding of the fear of the Lord for a contemporary reader of Proverbs 10:1–15:33.

The procedure thus followed an inductive reasoning methodology. In the context of this study inductive reasoning consisted of inferring general principles about the fear of Yahweh from specific instances, namely the proverbs in 10:1–15:33 that deal with the fear of the Lord. The hope was to come to an understanding that moves beyond foundations, beyond totalities and toward the Other, of the symbolic world with specific reference to the fear of the Lord that Proverbs 10:1–15:33 constructs for its readers and what it might mean for contemporary readers.

6.7 Thesis and conclusion

It is the thesis of this study that the proposed reading strategy is, in terms of the threefold movement within postmodern thought – the movements beyond foundations, beyond totalities and towards the Other – a most productive effort. The central characteristic of the postmodern environment is its conscious desertion of absolute truth claims. Any claim to know the truth in an absolute sense is considered with suspicion as being in actuality concealed power claims. Within this environment the proverbial genre presents a most effective communication medium. Edmondson (2005:342) notes that it is a perennial feature of wisdom in Hebrew and other traditions that it eschews dogmatism or certitude. The metaphorical construal of the symbolic-textual world of Proverbs has the ability to communicate in a non-totalising way as the proverbs present disseminated truths rather than universal foundational statements. "In fact," states Lawrie (2006:75) "they are, in their pristine form, not truths at all but metaphors still aware of their distance from any putative reality."

With a Ricoeurian hermeneutical approach, the fear of Yahweh-proverbs in Proverbs 10:1–15:33 are understood not to be dogmatised, absolute, universal truths but finds, in line with the movement beyond totalities, its authority in the context within which it is applied. Instead of communicating propositional content, which is in line with the movement beyond foundations within postmodern thought, by their power to disclose a symbolic world, it confronts the reader with the Other (both human and

divine), in line with the movement towards the Other, and consequently opens up new modes of being, orienting the reader's practical actions.

When this reading strategy is applied to Proverbs 10:1–15:33, with specific reference to the fear of the Lord, the concept of the fear of Yahweh is appreciated as having a functional definition within this collection rather than an ontological or theoretical one. The functional definition operates in terms of an invitation. The proverbs implore the reader to consider the consequences of the fear of the Lord and invite him/her to enter into a fearing relationship with Yahweh. Thus, the fear of Yahweh-sayings in Proverbs is an invitation to enter into a relationship with the Lord.

In terms of this invitation the postmodern environment presents both a tension and collaboration. The tension is in the postmodern resistance to any absolute or exclusive truth claim while the collaboration is in its openness to embodied, local truths. The tension occurs especially amidst the pluriformity and diversity of truth claims within the postmodern environment. These are not limited to religious truth claims that abound in the world religions and spiritual traditions. Amid these, the fear of Yahweh-proverbs maintain that the object of the fear of the Lord is very specifically Yahweh.

The pluriformity and diversity of truth claims within the postmodern environment also includes that of the scientific world view. This world view tends to either disregard transcendent reality as inconceivable as it is not known or verified empirically in terms of the modern understanding of reality, or limit its influence to the personal sphere as opposed to the public sphere. Contrarily the symbolic-textual world that Proverbs 10:1–15:33 constructs for the reader, simply assumes, as a datum, Yahweh's presence and involvement in the world and the possibility of a relationship with the Lord. For the scientific world view such an assertion might sit awkwardly.

Further tension is propounded by the democratic tendency, especially within modern day Western society that challenges any imposing truth claim that is associated with an authoritative stance and is perceived to be inflicted rather than elected. The proverbs' stern warning of the negative consequences of a lack of the fear of Yahweh could leave the impression of an authoritative position and further contribute

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to the tension encountered in terms of the invitation to a modern day reader to enter into the fear of the Lord.

To these tensions, the fear of Yahweh-proverbs presents a welcome account of embodied truth. Herein lays the collaboration that the postmodern environment presents the invitation to enter into the fear of the Lord: It is in its openness to embodied truth. Proverbs constructs for the contemporary reader an alternative vision of reality, but presents this construction as embodied truth gleaned from experience. The truth presented in the book is never alleged to be true in terms of revealed divine truth, but is positioned as advice that draw its persuasive force from the empirical observation by the teachers via a logic based on inductive reasoning (cf. Loader 2004:416–434). However, Loader (2004:433) points out that the synthetic world-view of Israel's wisdom tradition did not endure a partitioning of reality that differentiated between human perceptions of empirical reality on the one hand and faith in a God sustaining this reality on the other. Therefore the truth attested to in Proverbs need not be governed by the either/or of command as a matter of revelation and advice as a matter of reason (cf. Loader 2004:433).

The reader is prompted to test these claims against experience and is, in this way, invited to participate in Proverbs' construction of reality. Both the positive consequences of the fear of the Lord as well as the negative consequences of a lack of fear of the Lord are spelled out, but the truth testified to in the proverbs are not authoritatively imposed. The reader is left to decide for him-/herself either to embrace this construct of reality and live by it or to reject it.

Admittedly, not all contemporary readers of Proverbs 10:1–15:33 will accept the fear of Yahweh-proverbs' invitation to enter into the fear of the Lord. However, with the help of a Ricoeurian hermeneutic, these proverbs' invitation may at least be heard and understood in terms of the threefold movement within postmodern thought. In line with the movement beyond totalities, these proverbs present embodied metaphors rather than dogmatised, absolute, universal truths. In line with the movement beyond foundations, through their power to disclose a symbolic world they present the reader with an alternative "model of apprenticeship" to the God that is identified in the text (Wallace 2000:304–305) and consequently an alternative

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mode of being-in-the-world that unfolds in front of the text (Ricoeur 1977:29–30). In line with the movement towards the Other, both human and divine, it orients the practical actions of the contemporary person. For, as Nel (2002:442) aptly words it, "real wisdom is the exemplification of the "fear of the Lord"."

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