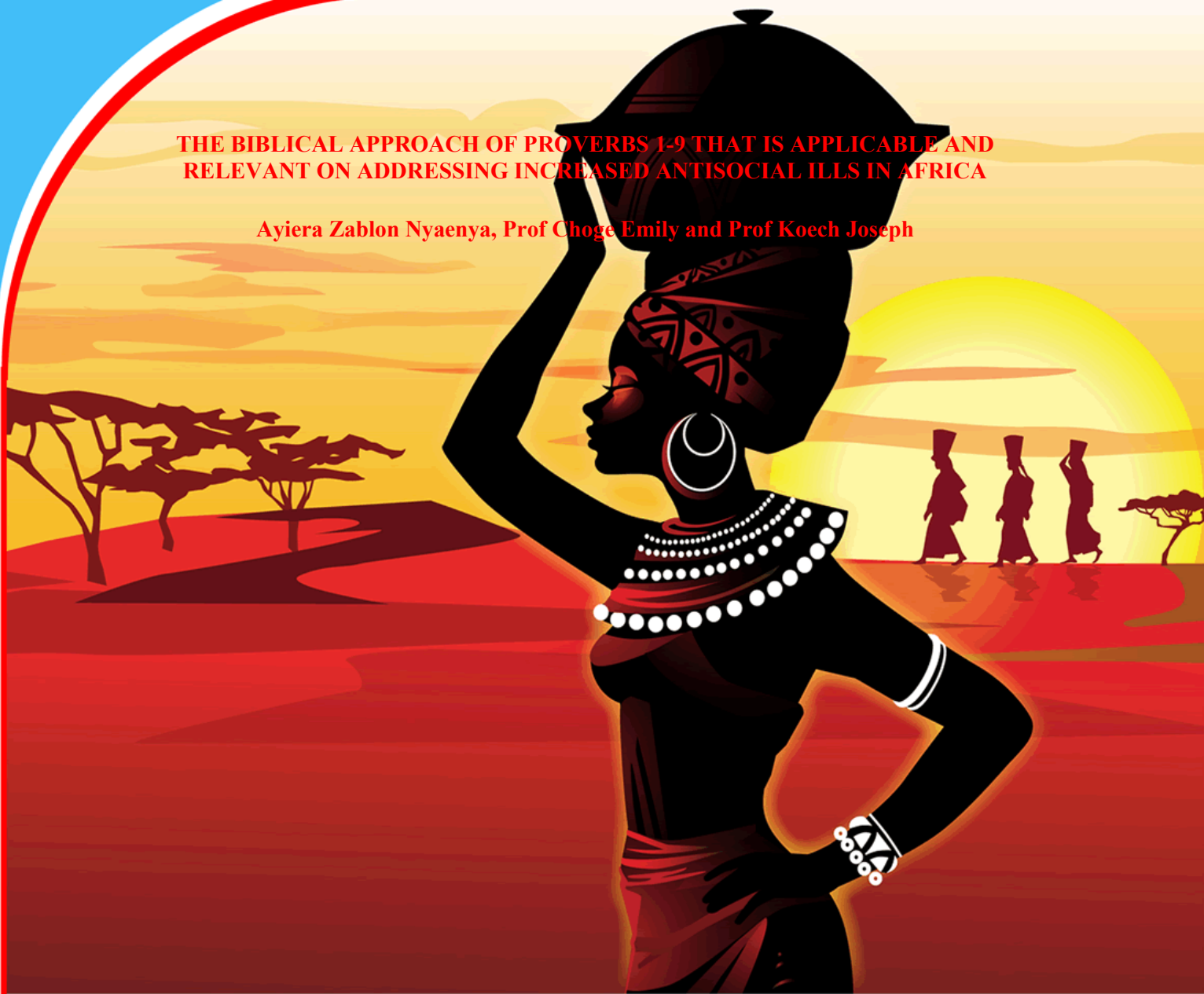


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**THE BIBLICAL APPROACH OF PROVERBS 1-9 THAT IS APPLICABLE AND
RELEVANT ON ADDRESSING INCREASED ANTISOCIAL ILLS IN AFRICA**

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to assess the Biblical approach of Proverbs 1-9 that is applicable and relevant on addressing increased antisocial ills in Africa.

Methodology: The study was a desktop research where review of empirical literature was done.

Results: It is only in the book of Proverbs 1-9 that we find the individual instructions from parents to their children. The book of Proverbs 1-9 can conveniently serve as the Biblical manual of parenting. The book of Proverbs 1-9 regards the home as the basic institution of learning the life skills. To appropriate the teachings and practices of Proverbs 1-9 in the life of child rearing in the African communities, there is need for the search of the Biblical approach that will enable parents to extract lessons that are applicable and relevant for the purposes of addressing increased anti-social ills in the community. The study argues that traditional-historical method of Biblical analysis as the most appropriate approach to be followed in the quest for the meaning of Proverbs 1-9 that will enable the extraction of lessons that are applicable and relevant in the African child rearing. The nature of the book of Proverbs 1-9 in terms of its traditional historical nature, social setting, purpose, relationship between it and other ancient near East wisdom literature, authorship and social-cultural environment are strong indicators that traditional historical method is the most appropriate approach that is relevant and applicable in the present African communities child rearing.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study hypothesizes that if the analysis of Proverbs 1-9 engages traditional-historical method, the crucial aspects of parenting which includes the parenting styles, contents of instructions and the goal of the instructions will be extracted. These aspects will ultimately serve as a foundation upon which child rearing in African communities be established. Understanding the Biblical teaching on child rearing in Proverbs 1-9 serves as a manual that deepens the understanding of Christian parenting in African communities hoping that it will contribute towards reducing anti-social ills.

Key words: *Christian teaching and practices, Parenting, Proverbs 1-9, Traditional historical approach, African communities and Anti-social ills.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The increased antisocial ills worldwide and African communities in particular, calls for a concerted effort of all parties that are engaged in the development of morals among the youth if anything goes by to address the challenge in the African communities. This antisocial behaviour can be witnessed in the drug and substance abuse, terrorist activities, arson in schools, theft and robbery with violence, rape cases, murder and suicide cases, abortion, street children, dropping from school, prostitution, immoral cases and many other vices among the youth. The parties involved in the moral development among the youth ranges from parents and guardians, school, government and religious organizations among others. The major players that address moral development are the parents. The home which is the natural habitat for children as opposed to the school, relatives' homes or any other place is the basic institution of instruction. Parents are the primary instructors of their children on moral values at home. This calls for an urgent need to empower parents so that they can be adequately equipped to carry out this noble task with far reaching effects competently. The role of the religious organizations stands out clearly as the most appropriate institution that can empower its adherents who are parents on how to carry out this noble task effectively. This should reignite a search for the foundations of our parental instructions. In the Christian church, the parental instructions found in the book of Proverbs 1-9 require a special consideration as a manual that can serve as a lesson book of empowering parents with skills to instruct their children on moral development. But since the ancient Israelites where parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 were used and the modern African communities are in two different worlds apart in several aspects ranging from their culture, geographical position, historical circumstances, social-political settings, religious believes, technological development, general expectations among others, then there is need for a search of an appropriate approach of Biblical interpretation that can make it possible to extract lessons which are applicable and relevant to the African context. Biblical scholars and theologians who for centuries have embarked on the study of Proverbs 1-9, have engaged several methodologies in trying to understand and apply its lessons. The methodologies that can be noted most scholars have used are source criticism, form criticism, textual criticism, historical criticism, literary criticism, grammatical criticism, redaction criticism among others. Biblical scholars and theologians have rarely considered the traditional historical method as the most appropriate approach that can be applied in the study of Proverbs 1-9 to adequately understand its ancient purpose and how it can be applied and be relevant in addressing moral erosion in the African communities. Yet the features displayed in the book reveal that the instructions in it were traditions passed from one generation to the other aimed at nurturing morality in the Ancient Israelite society. This paper examines the reasons why traditional-historical method is the appropriate approach that can be applied to understand its purpose and bring out the relevance of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 in addressing moral erosion in the African communities. This method of interpretation, when applied on the study of Proverbs 1-9 will make it possible to understand the traditions about parenting in the text, find out how these traditions can be relevant and significant to parenting in our present context. This will provide a foundation upon which the Christian church can appropriate its teachings on parenting to address the challenge of increased antisocial behavior in our African communities. The study provides a basis for my thought process that traditional

historical approach is the appropriate approach that can be applied in the study of proverbs 1-9 bringing out its relevance and significance on child rearing in the present context. Re-examining traditional historical approach as a method of biblical interpretation, the traditional historical nature of proverbs 1-9, the authorship of the book of Proverbs, the social setting of Proverbs 1-9, the purpose of Proverbs 1-9, the relationship of Proverbs 1-9 and other ancient near east wisdom literature, and finally the social cultural environment of Proverbs 1-9 asserts that traditional historical approach is the most appropriate method to be applied in the study of proverbs 1-9 for its application and relevance in addressing moral erosion in the African communities.

2.0 THE ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL HISTORICAL APPROACH AS A METHOD OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Traditional-Historical approach seeks to construct the history of the transmission of various individual traditions and tradition complexes that are to be found in the Old Testament. This approach does not function alone, since it lacks generally accepted techniques or evaluation criteria of its own. It draws nearly from the traditional methods of textual criticism, source criticism and form criticism which present a more or less systematic body of specific procedures on analysing a text to a certain guidelines. Traditional-historical criticism formulates the use of results obtained from operation of these methodologies (McKenzie, 1971). The difference of traditional historical approach as compared to these other approaches is that it goes beyond the information presented in the literal text, the supposed source of the text and the structural form the text is presented. Traditional historical approach tries to find out the traditions and the traditional complexes presented in the text. It traces the history of these traditions as revealed in the textual, source and form analysis of the text. The historical composition of a text plays a central role in analysing a particular text when applying this approach. The traditional historical approach engages in understanding how traditions that were passed on orally from one generation to another for a long period of time were collected and compiled into written form. The exegete using this approach identifies the authors of the texts not as authors but the ones who collected, compiled and edited the traditions of the community that were passed on orally from one generation to the other before they were presented in the written form. In the composition of these traditions, the material underwent a series of redaction expansions before we came to get it in the way it is presented in the current texts we have today (Knight, 1975).

Ancient Israel traditions were transmitted from one generation to another orally and also later in the written form. They form part of the ancient Israel literature as presented in the Old Testament. The traditions include but are not limited to proverbs, riddles, songs, poems, epics, and various kinds of folk narratives. These traditions usually originate with an individual or community and then are developed and shaped over course of their transmission by a group or groups who have a direct interest in their preservation and for whom they play a vital role. These traditions became alive only as long as they are functional on meeting the evolving “needs” of the group. Traditions have characters of change, or development over the course of their transmission if they are to continue to be viable (McKenzie, 1971).

Traditional-historical criticism seeks to reconstruct the history of the transmission of the various individual traditions and tradition complexes that are to be found in the OT. Beginning with the recognition of the history of the Bible and its contents, it views the Old

Testament and its various component parts as a body of largely traditional literature. This simply means that an exegete engaging traditional-historical criticism views the Bible as the product of a long process of composition and transmission and is most concerned with extending back beyond the written stage of the Bible's formation to embrace stages that can be discerned in the pre-literally history of a textual unit. Knight (1975) comments "for many traditional-historians it is this oral stage of traditions composition and transmission that is of utmost importance for understanding its particular characteristics". He further defines traditional-historical criticism as follows "it deals with the entire sweep of history that a tradition passes through from its earliest beginning as independent tradition unit to its final elaboration and expression within the Bible" (Knight 1975). McKenzie (1971) traces the emergence of traditional-historical criticism as follows "the origin of the discipline may be found in an impasse that had been reached as a result of a source critical studies in the Pentateuch, culminating in Julius Wellhausen's classic formulation of the documentary hypothesis at the end of the 19th century".

This impasse as to what really came to be the materials for the documents that Julius Wellhausen's came to consider as the source of the Pentateuch is the one that leads to our conclusion that there were some traditions that were passed orally from generation to generation. These are the materials that were collected, edited and compiled to documents which form the Old Testament scriptures. Since the family was considered as the basic institution of instruction of children in Israel, the instructional materials that were used at home should have been passed on orally over a long period of time before they were collected, edited and then compiled into a written form. The biblical traditions will be understood by tracing their history. Traditional historical approach will provide the solution for the challenge posed on the source critics about access to information behind the documents.

It became apparent that the challenge posed on the source critics about little or no access to the period before the documents were actually written. Herman Gunkel was able to show a way behind the written text of the Bible to earlier sources of Israel. In Gunkel's view, "the writers of the Old Testament were not so much authors as they were redactors (collectors) of the traditions of their people, adding little of their own to what they had received". And what they received "was merely the latest stage of a long process of these traditions formation in which they had been passed down faithfully over many generations by word of mouth" (McKenzie 1971). This means that Gunkel did not merely challenge Wellhausen's conception of the Old Testament sources as the written documents, but also developed a method congruent with the nature of the Old Testament's sources as "traditional" literature and this was form-criticism and his goal was to recover by means of form-critical analysis the earliest form of a traditional unit. Gunkel is justly recognized as the chief pioneer of traditional-historical criticism. Gunkel himself did not regard the products of oral tradition as appropriate materials for specifically "historical reconstructions", but as number of scholars who followed in his wake took note of his stance on the antiquity of oral traditions behind the Biblical narratives and on the fidelity of oral transmission. The prominent scholar who used the method is Albrecht Alt who offered a description of the distinctive nature of patriarchal religion before the rise of Yahwism at the time of Moses. The two other earlier scholars whose names are closely associated with traditional-historical criticism are Gerhard Von Rad and Martin Noth.

All of the above mentioned scholars concentrated on the Pentateuch. Their major concern was to harmonise different strata of materials presented in the Pentateuch by various Patriarchs. But when you study the other parts of the old testament books generally and the book of Proverbs in particular, you will realise that it contains traditions that were passed on orally from generation to generation for a long period of time before they were collected, edited and compiled to its present written form. Among them are the instructional materials that are found in the book of Proverbs 1-9. It will be prudent to study the traditions presented in the book of Proverbs 1-9 so that we can extract that which is relevant to the upbringing of the child in our present context aimed at addressing the increased antisocial ills in the present African communities.

A critical study and analysis of the five steps adopted from Gnuse's suggestions on how to apply traditional historical approach in the study of a text forms a strong argument that it is the most appropriate approach for the study of proverbs 1-9. These steps include, first the relationship of the Ancient Near Eastern parallels to the Biblical passage. Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 was not a unique phenomenon in Israel. There seems to be in fact a recognized genre of "instruction" in ancient Near Eastern wisdom. Just like wisdom instructions in Israel, there are more others in Egypt, and Mesopotamia. This indicates that wisdom instructions were a tradition that is not unique to Israel but an Ancient Near Eastern concept. Hence wisdom instructions in proverbs can be studied in comparison with wisdom instructions of the neighbours of Israel that may have influenced the author in oral or written formation of Proverbs 1-9 e.g. the Egyptian instructional Proverbs in relationship of the instructional materials of Israel.

Second step is considering the possible oral pre-history of the Biblical text being studied. Proverbs' greater emphasis is on hearing what is taught than on reading. The dominant factor in Proverbs 1-9 is oral instruction. The major requirement of the child from the parents' instruction is to memorize them. Thus if we ascribe wisdom instructions compilation in proverbs 1-9 to redaction, we must suppose that the redactor searched out and assembled materials that happened to express the same ideas in the same way, and the results is still a literary unity, though produced by redaction rather than authorship. The book of Proverbs 1-9 comprises of oral traditions of instruction. These materials were used at homes in the Ancient Near East and particularly in Israel for the instruction of children. The redactors searched out and assembled these instructional materials that seemed to express the traditions of the Israelites instruction of children. The result of this redaction is a literary unity. The literary unifying factor behind it is that the instruction of children occupied a central position in traditional Israel and possibly in a structured manner that was passed on from one generation to another orally before it was written.

Third, Envisioning how the Biblical text might have grown into its present literary context. In this step, diverse texts are associated with one another on the basis of common vocabulary, themes and theological ideas. To confirm the hypothesis that instructions were not originated by one author, diverse texts in proverbs should be considered to give a careful consideration on how the instructions were carried out. The diverse texts in Proverbs 1-9 reflect the idea that each household/family was committed to instructing the young people on the good moral requirements of the community. This took place in a homogenous way.

Fourth, a reflection on how the great cycle of the texts genre was connected to an even larger segment of literature. The interest is on the editorial process, observing additions to the text that appear literally in origin. This editorial process encompasses a consideration of how the traditions underwent a series of redaction and expansions. These expansions will help us to understand the significance of the traditions to the moral development and existence of Israel as a nation. The editorial process will aid to identify the historical strata of the traditions to indicate how the material originated and applied in the life of the community. The traditions presented in the written form by the editor can introduce a variety of materials in a unified work, but at some point the differences become prominent enough to indicate diverse origins and that is the case this step takes into consideration.

Last, the use or interpretation of the genre by later Biblical tradition. Here, the individual instruction should be considered on how it fits into the message of the entire instructions and the wisdom literature theology with regard to child rearing. This step deals with comparing how the instruction has been interpreted by modern scholars in relation to child rearing. It takes into consideration the lessons extracted from the study of the wisdom literature in the upbringing of morally upright children (Gnuse, 1999).

The five steps presented above seem to cover the essential areas that can aid in the application of the traditional historical approach on the study of proverbs 1-9, in order to understand how the ancient Israelite instructed the youth on life skills.

Traditional historical approach envisages historical experiences influencing traditions. This is because the task of the exegete is to study the history of tradition and its purpose in the Ancient Israelite society. The important aspect of the study of the history of traditions is to understand reasons why the retelling of traditions took place. Moving forward, the exegete tries to understand the results attained by the retelling of the traditions. In the application of the traditions, the exegete develops a framework of retelling these historical statements in a manner that is applicable and relevant in his/her context. It will be crucial for the exegete applying this approach to adopt some readjustments of the traditions in a way that will be readily applicable and relevant to our African experience. This basically means that the lessons developed are built upon the unity of the tradition building process. It will be important to develop a continuity of the Ancient Israelite tradition to be applicable and relevant in the present African communities. African communities will be an extension of the traditional building process out of which emerges lessons to address the present challenges. This will go beyond traditional historical facts and describe the living process forming tradition.

2.1 The Traditional Historical Nature of Proverbs 1-9

This section deals with the idea of whether Proverbs 1-9 contain Ancient Israel traditions that underwent the process of collection, redaction, compilation, and later expansions to its present form. Parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 were designed for oral rather than written transmission. This is clearly implied in Proverbs 1:8 and 4:1. In these verses, the father puts far greater stress on hearing what is taught than on reading. The dominant factor in Proverbs 1-9 is oral instruction, as the frequent references to hearing and memorizing indicate, writing is not mentioned. The parent would repeat the lessons expecting the child to memorize and quote verbatim. The whole purpose of these instructions was for the child to master the art of

success and be guided for successful living. Israel's Proverbs undoubtedly began in clan life, where it was orally used to prepare each generation to display good morals in the society. It is worthy to note that Proverbs are not peculiar in Israel. Wilson (1950) says "it is a universal phenomenon in ancient as in modern life". Proverbs are often assembled and used as means of popular instruction. Such proverbs hold a mirror up to life and reveal the quality of a people. Proverbs can provide a basis upon which Tribal and National morality can be evaluated. According to Patterson (1976), "Tribal and National morality can be evaluated by a study of Proverbs in any particular group and the development of a people may be measured by a study of its wisdom writings".

The earliest oral forms of this literature are found in Egypt and reach as far back as third millennium BC. Fortunately the Proverbs have been preserved to us, which were used as means of oral instruction at home. Later they were preserved in written form and used as manuals of instruction in the schools and loyal courts. Patterson says that, "Proverbs that were collected and presented in the written form refers to ancient wisdom already known in oral form long before the scribal ages" (1976). This implies that Proverbs were used in the earliest oral forms as a means of instruction at home and later preserved as manuals of instruction at homes, schools, and loyal courts.

The central philosophy of Proverbs in the earliest existence was for success. Proverbs instructed the children on the approach to life on the daily encounters. It was expected that those who adhered to the use of instructions became successful in life and were expected to be role models to others.

How can we then reconcile the idea that the book of Proverbs which bears the name of Solomon did not originate with Him? Is Solomon the author of the book of Proverbs? Why is his name associated with the book of Proverbs? Patterson says "the wisdom literature of the Old Testament is largely associated with Solomon, as the law is associated with Moses and Psalmody with David (1971). This can be adduced from the biblical passage:

Spake three thousand Proverbs..... And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the well; he spake also of beasts and of fowl and of creeping things and fishes (1 Kings 4:32, 33).

Solomon appears to have been universal in his interests and comprehensive in his sympathies. He was a magnificent patron of arts. But wisdom in Israel is older than Solomon. I agree with Kent that "We can pass back this date to earlier manifestations in the life of the Hebrew people. Wisdom had its home in the East and the children of the East are the wise par excellence" (Kent, 1926).

That is why Jeremiah says:-

Is wisdom no more in Terman?

Is counsel perished from the prudent?

Is their wisdom vanished? (49:7)

Solomon was considered in Israel as the wisest king that ever reigned. To give the book of Proverbs wider acceptance, those who compiled it associated it with the name of Solomon. The Proverbs collected, edited and compiled in the book of Proverbs had existed in Israel for

a long time orally before King Solomon. In fact they were as old as Israel nation. They were in existence long before Solomon was born. Therefore Solomon cannot be the author of the materials that were older than him. The question that now arises is why was Solomon associated with Proverbs in Israel? The answer was given above that Solomon was considered the wisest king who ever reigned in Israel and to give the book wide acceptance, the compilers of the Proverbs decided to associate it with King Solomon (Kent, 1926).

Now then how did the wisdom movement and in particular parental instructions in proverbs 1-9 originate in Israel? In the process of identifying and understanding the nature and origin of Proverbs in Israel, aiming to unearth the traditions handed down to us and the purpose of the Proverbs, it is worthy to determine the roots of Proverbs. The desert heritage of Israel is a most important factor here and whatever other influences may have affected Israel, we must not neglect this background. In the desert there was ample time leisure to reflection and the long fasts to which the desert dweller was lured lent to mind a swift detachment from the things of the sense. Faculties were strangely sharpened here and a strong self-regarding instinct developed without which the nomad could not survive. Experiences were interrogated and integrated into life situations and wisdom was acquired in most concrete and living fashion. There was constant conflict between men and wild beasts and wilder men. This wisdom found expression in realistic form and Proverbs were born (Kent, 1926). Kent seems to provide a basis on the tradition behind Israel wisdom literature and Proverbs in particular. He says “Proverbs like their literary successors, were intended to inculcate practical wisdom; they embody the distilled thought and reflection of countless generations” (Kent, 1926). This distilled thought and reflection had its roots in the desert when the Israelites were constructing their identity as people.

In the process of constructing their identity as people, they established standards of nurturing morality in the youth and the community in general. These standards were presented in the form of songs, poems, wise sayings, epics, and parental instructions. The distilled thought and reflection commencing in the desert heritage and moving forward provided bedrock upon which the Israelites developed instructions in the form of proverbs for the purpose of preserving their posterity. How did the ancient Israel ensure that the Proverbs developed followed a common standard? This study recognizes Trench’s work in his book “Proverbs and their lessons” that was published in the year 1857 as the most relevant work trying to find out the traditional-history on how Proverbs in Israel followed a uniform standard, even though that was not his intention. He says,”

Certain qualities must adhere to the saying before it graduates to the class of Proverbs and attains the ranks of the elect. First, it must be brief, for brevity is the soul of wit. Secondly, it must have a sense that means it must not be so compressed that its meaning cannot be grasped immediately. Thirdly, the Proverb must have salt, that is, a distinct tag or flavour, the element of pungency that gives it “kick”. Fourth element of the nature of a Proverb is popularity. The cute remark, all its sense and salt will fall still born to the ground if it is not caught up and repeated by the bystanders. It must be endorsed by public acceptance and repeated through generations before it becomes a real Proverb (1944).

The fourth element of the nature of a proverb i.e. popularity seems to be more relevant with the instructional materials in Proverbs 1-9. The repetition of the parental instructions and its

preservation as written document implies that they existed for a long time in the oral form. They developed over a period of time and passed through several stages of development and elaboration, before expressed within the Bible. Thus we may confidently say that Proverbs are born and not made. Carns says “Proverbs are common property and belong to the world. There is no copyright in them (1937)”. The putting together forth of Proverbs and narratives demonstrate that they had a significant role in the moral development of humanity.

The knowledge of social life in Ancient Israel is crucial for it will let in a flood of light. The exegete engaging traditional historical approach must piece together the story from many sources biblical and extra biblical (Scott, 1971). This is because wisdom was a fine fruit of a tradition originally rooted in the moves of family and tribe and local community, and hence to a degree was as old as society itself (Perdue, 1994). Scott says “Any attempt to trace the history of wisdom tradition in Israel through the Old Testament only is handicapped by its relative paucity and selective nature” (Scott, 1971). The editors of the primary narrative account of Israel’s history from the conquest of Canaan to the Babylonian exile are concerned chiefly with a prophetic interpretation of that history. That is why Gnuse’s five steps of the application of traditional historical approach discussed in the previous section are crucial. The utilization of extra biblical sources, other Ancient Near Eastern parallels, possible oral pre-history of the instructions, envisioning how the Biblical text might have grown into its present literally context, a reflection on how the great cycle of the texts genre was connected to an even larger segment of literature, and the use or interpretation of the genre by later Biblical tradition shall be of great significance. The whole purpose is to understand the reason for the persistent survival of the instruction tradition, its contribution to moral development, and the application and relevance of its lessons in the present African context.

Weinfeld (2004) provides an outline on the history of development of wisdom tradition through which it can be evaluated. The first stage in this outline is where it is considered that from the earliest times a tradition of instruction existed among the Israelite families. This earliest time is traced to the desert heritage when the Ancient Israelites were trying to construct their identity. These no doubt include strictly religious and ethical instructions as well as “common sense” teachings on the daily problems of life. The next stage of development was after the presentation of the covenant law of Moses. This law, particularly as it is summarized in the book of Deuteronomy, certainly would have had a profound effect in the ancient Israelite psyche and the teachings of the family and Folk wisdom (Deut 6:7; 20 Joshua 4:6). Much of Israelite folk wisdom would have continued to concern itself with common problems of daily life as it had from the beginning and would have included few explicit references to the Torah.

The third stage was the rise of the Monarchy and the beginning of Solomon’s empire. For the first time, a large upper class emerged in Israel. This included landed gentry, court officials, and members of the royal family. The rise of the powerful upper class with leisure time is often accompanied by an interest in literary culture and this was the case as well. The work of “the men of Hezekiah” (Proverbs 25:1) may be considered a continuation of the process. Israelite court wisdom was born, which combined the literary expertise of the scribes with the traditional wisdom of Israel to produce a synthesis that was both cosmopolitan and genuinely Israelite. The fame of Solomon’s wisdom among the nations (1 Kings 4:34) indicates its cosmopolitan outlook and common ties to the wisdom of the other nations and this is confirmed by comparison of extant near Eastern wisdom literature to the Bible.

This Israelite synthesis, however, was not “secular” in outlook but was based upon a Deuteronomist principle. Still, the roots of Israelite wisdom in traditional family teaching and international court wisdom guaranteed that the product would not just be applied theology or a commentary on the law but an original work dealing with the problems in life of God’s world. Proverbs is therefore a tradition that developed over time for practical and down to earth teachings and sayings for nurturing morality in the Israelite community.

The fourth stage of this history is the exile. The scribal traditions became exclusively tied to the temple and priesthood no longer was part of a loyal court. The Jews who returned to the land were determined to keep the law and avoid another disaster like the exile. In this context, the written Torah naturally became the explicit focus of attention. This process had already begun in the canon, but is fully developed in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach.

This framework provides a basis of understanding that parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 are oral traditions that were passed on from one generation to another. Since this oral tradition played a crucial role in empowering parents on how to nurture morality among the Israelites youth, they were preserved later in the written form for protecting their identity. Fortunately we have them and if properly understood and its teaching applied in the African context, they shall be of great contribution in addressing the increased antisocial ills.

2.2 The Authorship of the Book of Proverbs

Scholars have given different views and opinions regarding the authorship of the book of Proverbs. The main aim of our consideration on the authorship of Proverbs 1-9 is not to add our voice to the opinions presented, but to find out how the authorship of the book supports our thesis that traditional historical approach is the most appropriate approach of interpreting it. Despite the claim of the book of being essentially authored by Solomon (1:1; 10:1; 25:1) and its collection during the reign of Hezekiah (25:1) in 729-686 B.C., critical scholars generally consider Proverbs to have had a long and complex history of development not completed until after the Israelites exile. Three major traditional historical reconstructions of significance are those of Skehan (1947); Whybray (1994) and Mckane (1970). The major conclusion of their analysis is that Proverbs does not have a single or even a major “author” at all in the traditional sense of the term but is instead a product of a long process of compilation, redaction, and theological revision (Skehan, 1947). This can be noted when you get into a first encounter with the book of Proverbs. The book seems to begin over and over again, as if it were itself a mini-library containing smaller works each with its own title and author, “The Proverbs of Solomon”, “Words of the wise”, “The words of Agur”, and so on (Mckane, 1970). The book claims Solomon the son of David, king of Israel as its author (Proverbs1:1). According to Nichol (1976) says that “Solomon was author of the book seems evident from chapters 1:1, 10:1, and 25:1.” However what Nichol is not able to reconcile in his argument of Solomon as the author of Proverbs based on the internal evidence of the book is what we read in Proverbs 30:1, and 31:1 which ascribes the words of Proverbs to Agur the son of Jakeh and king Lemuel respectively.

Mckane’s argument seems to provide a basis of understanding why the book of Proverbs contains the micro-level of the individual Proverbs and the macro-level of the book as a whole. He says “the author of the micro-level of the individual Proverbs can’t represent a

single author but a production of traditional materials of various individuals, families and clans” (1970). It can be argued that the macro-level of the book as a whole represents the compilation of the individual traditional materials of individuals, families, and clans into a written form. Individual Proverbs existed for a long time in Israel and ancient near east in the oral form. It was developed over a period of time. It passed through several stages of development and elaboration, before they were expressed within the Bible (Whybray, 1972). Thus, we can confidently say that no individual wrote all the Proverbs but they were simply compiled from the already existing traditional individual Proverbs. Carn’s conclusion that “Proverbs are common property and belong to the society and there is no copyright in them (1937)”, seems to provide a convincing argument about the origin and authorship of Proverbs. It can be argued that Solomon son of David, Agur the son of Jakeh and king Lemuel edited, compiled and put together forth the individual Proverbs. The putting together forth of Proverbs and narratives demonstrate that they had significant role in the moral development of humanity.

Solomon was considered in Israel as the wisest king that ever reigned. To give the book of Proverbs wider acceptance, those who compiled it associated it with the name of Solomon (Kent, 1926). The Proverbs compiled had existed for a long time orally. In fact they were as old as Israel nation. They were in existence long before Solomon was born.

This study adopts the conclusion of R. scott, to be the most probable position about the authorship of Proverbs. Scott’s conclusion is that much of the attribution of great wisdom to Solomon is late, legendary, and of little historical value. He further argues from Proverbs 25:1 that the real dawn of literally wisdom in Israel was in the reign of Hezekiah (Scott 1971). It is reasonable assumption that the materials contained in Proverbs may perhaps have existed and passed on orally before they were elaborated and compiled in written form from the period of Hezekiah and forward. The study takes the assumption that the instruction in Proverbs may have established itself in Israel long before Solomon and the compilation of the instructional genre. This is the reason why understanding traditional historical circumstances of the instructional genre of Proverbs will aid the study to understand how parents were instructed in traditional Israel and its significance in addressing antisocial behaviour if appropriated the African context.

2.3 The Social-Cultural Environment of Proverbs 1-9

The social cultural factors that occasioned the origin and development of the instructions in the book of Proverbs is essential to this study because it provides a basis of understanding how traditional historical approach can be engaged in the study of parental instructions, to be applicable and relevant in the African social cultural environment. Von Rad says that “Israel’s own history begins in the thirteenth century BCE with the liberation of a number of groups from various situations and domination and oppression. These experiences were all caught up and focused in the story of liberation of a small but important minority of what grew into ‘Israel’ of the tribal confederation period, roughly 1250-1050 BCE” (1974). The model or paradigm story of the liberation of the people of Israel is ‘the Exodus’ from Egypt of a small group of slaves under a leader named Moses (Whybray, 1972). The above arguments have raised a lot of debate surrounding the origin of Israel as a nation. Several hypotheses have been advanced about the origin of Israel ranging from the miraculous

deliverance from bondage in Egypt by almighty God, liberation of a number of groups from various situations, domination and oppression and a coming together of mountain dwellers that identified themselves with a unique God (Von Rad, 1974). The scope of this study is not the origin of Israel as a nation but on how the parents of Israel instructed their children on moral development. The social cultural environment upon which these instructions flourished and found its expression and wider use is what can provide a solid foundation for its application and relevance in the modern African context.

Von Rad provides an insight into social cultural environment of the instruction as expressed in Proverbs 1-9. He says that “already clan and family wisdom had flourished for centuries among the various peoples who made up early Israel. This ‘popular wisdom’ evolved over generations through parenting, and prepared each generation to cope with life and achieve some degree of success and satisfaction”. From the Exodus and subsequent formation of ‘the tribes of Israel’, in the hill country of Canaan, Israel wisdom will bear the mark of the religious culture of these people. This religious culture characterised especially by their worship of Yahweh, the God who stands by parents for a well ordered and moral society. Establishment of moral individual, families, clans and Israel nation as a whole was considered paramount for the proper functioning of Israel as a nation (Whybray, 1972).

Israel as a nation underwent several historical, social, and cultural development including the establishment of the monarchy around 1000 BCE, the uprising of the Mesopotamian powers that conquered Israel and other ancient near east nations and took them captives such as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and then the Roman government (Mckane, 1970).

The crisis of the exilic and post exilic period that Israel found itself in threatened their identity as a people. Confusion followed this crisis of losing their identity. At one blow, all that had appeared to be at the heart of their life as a people-the holy city of Jerusalem, its temple, and rich cultic traditions and the Davidic kingship- had been brought to a brutal end. The effort to grasp what had happened, much less to begin to pick up the pieces and rebuild was staggering (Von Rad 1974). The challenge for the Jewish people during the exile and into the post exilic period was not only to survive but also to lay the groundwork for the future without abandoning their past roots. They had literary to rebuild and recreate their identity as a people. This rebuilding and recreating involved an enormous literary activity which resulted in the production of large portions of Israel’s history, cultic teachings, Laws and many other materials of what today constitutes our Bible among them the instructions as contained in Proverbs 1-9 (Whybray, 1972).

The compilation of Israel’s traditions that had existed for a long period of time orally, facilitated the democratization of culture and thus provided a new dynamic for cultural change. Written documents played an important role in the peoples struggle to articulate their self-understanding and to safeguard future generations founding visions and hopes. The wisdom writings, within which instructions in Proverbs 1-9 are found, deal with family matters and individual concerns mainly meant for moral development (Kent, 1926). The wisdom literature in general and the instruction in particular in Proverbs 1-9 represent a whole array of survival strategies in the midst of the confusing and challenging postexilic world. The instructions offered away for the ‘wise’ individual to live a fulfilling and satisfying life of love and loyalty to Israel’s covenant God a ‘spirituality’ for dealing with the

pressures and challenges of daily life as a faithful Jew. This is the social-cultural environment of the parental instructions found in Proverbs 1-9 upon which wisdom movement in Israel can be evaluated for its application and relevance in the African social cultural environment aimed at addressing moral erosion in the communities.

2.4 The Social Setting of Proverbs 1-9

The *Sitz Im Leben* of the text is important for understanding the texts meaning and purpose in concrete way (Stuart, 1980). Understanding the social setting of Proverbs 1-9 will definitely aid in the search that traditional historical method is the best approach that is applicable and relevant in addressing moral erosion in the African communities. The approach when applied, it makes it clear to the interpreter how the text was understood in the original context, and help the interpreter in the application of the text in his own context. Scholars do not agree on the social setting of Proverbs 1-9. Various settings such as royal court, school, and home are suggested as possible social context of the book of Proverbs. There is an assumption based on the nature of the book of Proverbs that it owes its formation to the royal court (Humphreys, 1978). It is assumed that there was an educated and literate group in Israel during the reign of Solomon that was responsible for writing down the Proverbs (Dell, 2000). Some have even suggested the Hezekiah royal court (Proverbs 25:1) when they could not deny the evidence that the book of Proverbs could not have been written during the reign of Solomon. This assumption has led to some scholars to conclude that there was a group of educated people who gave instructions to those who has potential to be leaders of society (Dell, 2000). It can be argued that this is a forced assumption based on the comparative studies of wisdom literature in Israel and in Egypt. This is unacceptable, because there are a few if any clear references to court schools in the OT. Dell (2000) concludes this discussion by saying that the court context in general is taught by recent scholars as to have been overstressed. Therefore, the loyal court can't be the possible setting of Proverbs 1-9.

The second possible setting of Proverbs 1-9 that was suggested in its history of interpretation is that of a school. This implies that there were schools in ancient Israel, that is, a professional education, which involved both reading and writing, at a specific location to which young people came and for which fees were paid to a teacher (Crenshaw, 1995), whose primary task was to transmit knowledge from teachers to pupils. For this reason Proverbs 1-9 was evidently composed for use as a textbook in such schools (Whybray, 1974). Von Rad, in his argument for a school as a social setting of our text concludes "In Israel too, writing was known. But writing has to be taught, and was never taught without accompanying teaching material. It follows from this that there must have been schools of different types in Israel." Von Rad, however, fails to bring forth concrete evidence either from text itself or from the history of Israel for the existence of schools in ancient Israel.

Moss (1972) argues that a supposition of the school in Proverbs 1-9 is intrusive and unhelpful. The text itself does not provide us with evidence to prove that the school was the social setting of Proverbs 1-9. Crenshaw (1985) concludes that there is a deficiency of hard evidence on education in ancient Israel.

The third possible social setting of Proverbs 1-9 is that of a household or a family. This simply means that it was the responsibility of a family through parents to impart knowledge as we have it in Proverbs 1-9 to children.

Perdue (1981) and Van Leeuwen (1990) suggest liminality as a social setting of Proverbs 1-9. They were simply saying that the instruction in Proverbs 1-9 was used to guide a child from childhood to adulthood. A child is helped to pass from one stage to another and is given rules and guidelines for successfully meeting his new responsibilities. The road ahead to adulthood is full of temptations, peer group pressure and bad influence from the immoral members of the community (Perdue, 1981). Therefore, through these instructions the parents, both mother and father, are trying to entice the untutored to a wisely ordered and godly life (1:7, 29). From the text itself, there is evidence of a parent giving numerous instructions to his or her son (2:2; 3:13; 5:1; 7:4). This evidence led Murphy (1981) to conclude as follows; ‘the frequent address, my son is not merely stylistic and indicative of a teacher-pupil relationship in scholastic instruction. It reaches back into the family, where a responsible relationship between parents and children would have first emphasized. In the text itself, we read words like “Father”, “Son”, and “Mother.” I do not see any reason for not understanding these words literally as expressing a family relation, and not a relationship between teacher and his pupil. The moment we start to understand them otherwise, it is an indication that we are not faithful to the text but are bowing to the external pressures of comparative studies of wisdom literature. The comments of Brueggemann, is writing to note that a family is a decisive socializing agent, which constructs a world of limit and choice of symbol and imagination, in which the child may safely live.

Hagerdon (2000), referring to parenting in Israel, says “since it was a disgrace for the father to have brought up a son badly, so it was that the parents sought to control and direct the child.” This is exactly what is advocated by Proverbs, which stress the importance of guiding the son on the right path and the son is well advised to listen to the authority of the father. Family as a social setting in which a child is helped in his or her journey to adulthood, confirms God’s instruction to parents that they are the primary source for the impartation of knowledge and moral values in their children.

Therefore, we conclude in this section that Proverbs 1-9 is an instruction from parents to their children. This happens in the setting of the family where the father instructs the children on the principles of life. The mother equally contributes to the impartation of life skills to the child (Proverbs 1:8). The book of Proverbs clearly reveals the father urging the son to hear the instruction of the father and not to forsake the commandments of the mother. The father, mother and child relationship is never found in a loyal court nor a school setting but household or family setting. The cooperation of the father and mother in the upbringing of children is clearly demonstrated in Proverbs. Parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 clearly reveals that the primary social institution of training children moral values is the home. The father and mother are instructors while the children are students. The lesson is moral development. This is relevant and significant in addressing the challenges of moral erosion in the African communities. The choice of a method of interpretation of a text depends majorly on the social setting of the text. Since the social setting of the text is a household or a family, traditional historical approach is an appropriate method of understanding the meaning of the text. Traditional historical approach will help us to uncover the earlier times that the Proverbs existed in the oral form. Then it will assist us to understand how the lessons found in the Ancient Israel parental instructions contained in Proverbs 1-9 can be applied in the modern African society to address increased moral erosion among the youth.

2.5 The Purpose of Proverbs 1-9

The purpose of proverbs 1-9 is a strong indicator that traditional historical method of biblical criticism is the most appropriate approach for the study of the parental instructions contained in the texts that may be applicable and relevant in nurturing morality in the modern African communities. Various scholars understand the main aim and purpose of Proverbs 1-9 as an instructional one. Mckane agrees that Proverbs 1-9 has to do with education, although his focus was on the impartation of intellectual knowledge to Children. Mckane (1997) says “the educational process was more occupied with developing mature intellectual attitudes than with morality. Its concern was to impart negotiating skills, to nurture soundness of judgement and to produce a weighty and effective individual”. It did not educate men to change the existing world into something better, but to make their way successful in the world, as it was.

Brown rightly refutes Mckane’s assessment of the purpose of Proverbs 1-9, as it has to do with the development of intellectual attitudes. Brown (1996,) argues “that Proverbs 1-9 is concerned with both the intellectual and moral attitudes of a child. To dichotomise intellectual and moral values is to miss the point of Proverbs 1-9, and that dichotomy was never in the mind of an ancient sage”. Brown is absolutely right in his refutation of Mckane’s assessment because the sayings contained in proverbs 1-9 also teach a young man how to live his life in such a way that he can promote peace in the community, e.g. Proverbs 5:15-23; 6:1-6; 6:12-15).

Whybray (1974,) says “This is all pedagogical material, designed to be used in the preparations of boys and young men to face the problems and dangers of the adult world so that they may become wise and responsible members of it”. For Whybray (1994), Proverbs 1-9 deals with the preparation of boys and girls in, the upper class of society to adulthood. Whybray’s conclusion is unacceptable, because there is no such indication in the text itself that its concern lies with Children from the upper class. It is evident that he is working from the presupposition that Proverbs 1-9 is fulfilling, the same task as the Egyptian instruction. Harris (1995), in his assessment of Whybray’s understanding of Proverbs 1-9 in relationship with an Egyptian lesson book, argues that according to Whybray, Proverbs 1-9 has its roots in the Egyptian Lesson book. The lesson book was appropriated by the wise men of Israel. Whybray uses Egyptian instruction as a procrustean bed for Proverbs 1-9. This is unacceptable because the context of each text is of primary importance in this interpretation.

Fox (1997) also suggests that the wisdom that the father is teaching his son is more than intellectual. He regards wisdom as a power that resides in the learner as an inner light that guides a person through life. This wisdom cannot, therefore, be defined as erudition or unusual intellect but is a kind of wisdom that will help a child to withstand temptations and seduction posed on his way by sinful men and women and to discern right from wrong, and the desire to pursue right. For Fox (1997), the greatest goal for education, also in proverbs 1-9, is to foster moral character in the child. Brown wrote a monograph entitled, “Character in Crisis,” In which he emphasized that building the moral character of a child is one of the greatest goals of wisdom literature in the Old Testament, especially in Proverbs 1-9.

Brown (1996) indicates that where wisdom is received, a person will experience communal values such as righteousness, justice and equity. This implies, therefore, that those who

receive the father's instruction or wisdom become responsible and productive citizens of the community and whose identity is built upon the foundation of righteousness and justice founded by the past generation.

Proverbs 1-9 is concerned with both the intellectual and moral attitudes of a child. The dramatic situation is of a father instructing his son. In the instructions of Proverbs 1-9, the father is the speaker. There is no justification for the common assumption that the speaker is a schoolteacher. How can we say that the instructions were used in school and yet the person instructing is the father, the student is the son. The father identifies his teaching with that of his wife, who is certainly not a schoolmistress (Proverbs 1:8; 4:3; 6:20; and compare 31:26). Where are the father, mother, and son found? Is it at a school or home? What is the purpose of instruction at home? This is the basis upon which we can understand the purpose of Proverbs 1-9. The father, mother, and son are found in a home setting and not the school nor loyal court. The aim of instruction at home is to guide the child to develop the desire of acquiring knowledge and good moral behaviour in the community. With the goal of moral character clearly in view in the mind of the father and mother for their child at home, the parents dedicate their skills and time in moulding the child into a morally responsible adult. In early times, the father and mother are not using a manual that was developed and presented as instruction notes. The parental instructions flow spontaneously from the accumulated experiences passed down orally from one generation to another. In the process of applying them in the individual homes and families, they automatically undergo redaction expansions and elaborations meant to meet the expectations of nurturing morals. With this purpose in mind, parental instructions in proverbs 1-9 were developed. These parental instructions were finally collected, edited, and compiled as presented in Proverbs 1-9. The purpose of preserving them was meant to provide young parents with materials that can assist them to nurture future generations with good morals.

Form and literary analysis of the text clearly shows that the text is about the relationship between a parent and a son. It has to do with the father-son relationship, in which teaching-Learning activity is taking place. In this relationship, a son is urged to adhere to his father's commandments and discipline. A parent gives his instructions in a second-person address to a 'son' or 'sons'. This indicates a close relationship and love that exist between a parent and a child. His instructions are described as wisdom, which a child has to strive very hard in order to find in this life, because they determine the course of his life.

The instructions contain themes that indicate that these instructions have to do with the life of a child that is growing in the household. A child is warned against peer-group pressure that might entice him to join gang members, whose purpose is to destroy other people's lives in the community. In order to become a responsible community member, he is to seek wisdom like a silver or hidden treasure. Wisdom will teach a child the way of righteousness, equity and justice. It will also save him from the loose woman (2:1-22), who leads her victims to Sheol, and from the way of the wicked, who will not live long. A parent's instructions teach a child not to rely on his sight, but to rely and trust in the Lord. This implies that his relationship to Yahweh is essential for his success and prosperity in life. His relationship to Yahweh is a basis upon which a child can build a good relationship with his neighbours. In Proverbs 4:20-27, a father's instructions are described as a healing to all flesh. This means that if a son adheres to the teaching of his father or mother, he will save himself from several

social ills that can affect his life. The father's instruction will help him to look after his heart and to be faithful to the wife of his youth. Estes (1997) says, "The Hebrews viewed the heart as the centre of the rational and emotional life. Because the heart controls all of life, it is the key to personal success or failure. Consequently, the father challenges the son to guard it carefully, lest his whole life be ruined. The heart, representative of the character, inevitably affects the outcome of the total person".

In the book of Proverbs 1-9, the father gives the child exhortations and injunctions with magisterial authority, demanding attention and obedience. This authority is not derived from the position of the school teacher nor the king in the loyal court but from his parental position. The father plays the role of the transmitter of ancient teachings. The instructions he gives to his son is not solely his own but is derived from the Israelites tradition passed down from one generation to the other. This can be understood from the reference of the fathers teaching that he received from his own father. He tells his son on how his own father gave him instruction, not so much adding new information. The impartation of wisdom on how to navigate through life, and overcome the dangers that lead to misbehaviour with the aim of developing good moral character is the purpose of proverbs 1-9. Education in the family is really a foundation of life in the community. The life which wisdom sees as the goal and meaning of human existence is the well-being of the community and each of its members.

Therefore, we may conclude together with Bergant (1997) that "the instruction is a general motivation urging compliance to the accepted mores and customs of the society". The young child is admonished to listen to his elders and to pattern his life after theirs. Success and prosperity are placed before him as incentives to conform; the threat of failure and deprivation is meant to deter him from unacceptable behaviour. Estes (1997) views the ultimate purpose of the instruction as the impartation of the knowledge of Yahweh, which is a supreme goal that draws all of education and life together into an integrated whole.

The instructions in Proverbs 1-9 reveal that the household is an important place of piety and education. Both parents are involved in this kind of education in the household. This is confirmed by the fact that both mother and father are mentioned in the instruction genre as people who are responsible for child-rearing. Hence, the household is regarded in this genre as the most basic and primary functioning unit of the community. Thus, we learn from the instruction genre how households can raise their children. If every home achieves this purpose, then antisocial ills will be minimised in the modern African communities.

2.6 The Relationship Between Proverbs 1-9 and other Ancient Near East Wisdom Literature

The study of Proverbs 1-9 and its relationship with the ancient near east wisdom literature supports the thesis that traditional historical approach is the appropriate method for the interpretation of parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 aimed at its application and relevance in addressing moral erosion in African communities. Scholars generally agree that Israelite wisdom was greatly influenced by wisdom literature of her neighbouring countries, but they do differ on the extent of the influence (Whybray, 1965, Mckane, 1970; Clifford, 1999). This raises several hermeneutical questions. First, did Israelite wisdom teachers merely copy wisdom sayings from their neighbours? Is it true that Yahwistic thinking in Proverbs 1-9 was

a later addition to the secular Proverbs from Israel's neighbouring countries? Does the relationship help us in understanding and interpretation of Proverbs 1-9?

The wisdom movement of Israel and especially instruction of Proverbs 1-9 are closely linked with Egyptian instructions. Von Rad argues that "Solomon's principal wife was an Egyptian princess and he seems to have modelled his court organization on that of Pharaoh's where for many centuries scribes had been engaged in literally composition as well as serving in the conduct of official business" (Von Rad, 1953). Features of Proverbs 1-9 comparable with the Egyptian instructions include an emphasis on the importance of hearing and obeying the teaching, the significance of the heart as the centre of the human will, and the parallel between wisdom and *Ma'at* (a Hebrew word meaning the heart) as the source of life and as governing the minds of the authorities (Whybray, 1995). There are also differences between the two literatures. In Egyptian instructions, there is no constant employment of the expression "my son", and the "mother" and "father" are not associated together in teaching their son. This clearly proves that one text cannot be used as a procrustean bed of another text. We may, therefore, agree with Mckane who argues for an international instruction genre in the Ancient Near East (Mckane, 1970). Thus it is probable that the Israelite writing remained an Israelite writing for Israel. It was not copied from another culture. It never adopted any specifically Egyptian belief or vocabulary, but used what it was familiar with (Whybray, 1965). It is therefore, invalid for any exegete to see the Proverbs 1-9 text as full of Yahwistic additions. Such an assertion is a denial of the fact that Proverbs 1-9 is part of the Israelite pedagogical tradition that did not necessarily need to borrow from any other culture. Still, it probably did borrow. It is of great significance in the interpretation of Proverbs 1-9 to study it in the context of the Ancient Near East. This helps to understand how Proverbs were used and understood not only in Israel but also in the neighbouring countries. In turn, it will enable us to interpret our text. Clifford (1999), in his study of Proverbs within the context of the Ancient Near East, spells out three assumptions of ancient wisdom that are so crucial for our own understanding of Proverbs 1-9. The first assumption is that wisdom had to do with practical rather than theoretical knowledge. A husband is wise because he knows how to look after his wife (Clifford, 1999). This is how wisdom was understood, not only in Israel but also in the whole region of the Ancient Near East. This is opposed to the understanding of wisdom in the 21st century. Wisdom is understood as something that has to do with the amount of knowledge one possesses. However, this is not how Biblical wisdom is understood. Thus, we are provided here with hermeneutical parameters within which we are to understand and interpret Proverbs 1-9. Wisdom is how one lives one's life, not the quantity of knowledge in one's mind.

The second assumption is that wisdom belonged to the gods (Clifford, 1999). Human beings needed wisdom from the gods to be civilized and to be good servants of the gods. This clearly tells us that wisdom was never a strange fellow in the religious world views of the Ancient Near East. Wisdom was always a part of the religious worldview of the Ancient Near East.

The third assumption that Clifford (1999) points out is that heavenly wisdom comes to the human race mediated by earthly institution or authorities, such as the King, scribes and heads of families. This is important for this study because it points to the crucial role of those who are authorities, such as parents. Children cannot be wise by themselves; they are to be led

towards wisdom. In adulthood, children will reflect on what they have received from parents in their childhood. The only way that God has devised to impart knowledge to children is by using parents and others that are in authority, such as teachers.

It is therefore, maintained in this study that Proverbs 1-9 is to be studied and interpreted using the traditional-historical approach for its application and relevance in the modern African communities. This approach considers the Ancient Near Eastern context because it provides us with hermeneutical parameters. The Book of Proverbs shares the literary forms of the Proverbial and wisdom literature of the ancient near East. This common literary background may help the exegete achieve one of the purposes of the Proverbs to understand the various types of wisdom Literature.

3.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the foregoing discussion clearly reveals that parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 are oral traditions of Ancient Israel that were used at home by parents to instruct their children on the good morals expected of them. Further, that Proverbs 1-9 material existed in oral form and underwent several stages of development before it was collected, compiled and edited to its written form that has been handed down to us. The application of traditional historical approach in the textual analysis of Proverbs 1-9 will make it possible to understand the Israelites traditional teaching and practices on parenting with the aim of understanding how it may inform the African Christian communities on parenting. The study strongly affirms that the application of traditional historical approach will help to extract those traditions of the Israelites on parenting that are relevant and applicable in the African child rearing. The ultimate goal is to help the African Christian communities address the challenge of increased antisocial ills among the youth.

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