

# Wisdom literature and the question of priority—Solomon’s Proverbs or Amenemope’s *Instruction*

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As early as 1857, scholars became convinced they had discovered striking similarities between some Egyptian writings and a number of biblical texts. Over the course of the next 65 years they became ever more certain that some of the Egyptian ‘Wisdom literature’ was similar in form, style, and even content to the Book of Proverbs. They concluded that the wisdom literature of ancient Egypt in particular had preceded its biblical counterpart, which was thought to have been plagiarized from the Egyptian texts. The Bible critics clearly based their case on inadequate biblical exegesis coupled with secular chronologies, and have been unable to demonstrate the parallels they have claimed exist. This paper exposes the frailty of their case and the resultant errors, and reinforces the reliability of the Bible.

## The background history

Challenges to the Wisdom literature of the Bible arose when Bible theology began to be re-examined in the ‘light’ of science. The pace accelerated in 1923 with the publication of Budge’s complete text of the *Instruction of Amenemope*, British Museum papyrus 10474; published in full, with photo facsimiles of the original hieratic, a hieroglyphic transcription, and a first attempt at a translation.<sup>1</sup>

This publication (henceforth ‘*Instruction*’) contained speculative ideas to explain apparent similarities between the Egyptian and Hebrew texts.<sup>2</sup> Budge unwittingly opened the proverbial Pandora’s Box. Secularist Bible critics, empowered beyond their wildest dreams, launched attacks on biblical accuracy.

In 1924, Alfred Erman took Budge’s ideas further, claiming a close parallelism between *Instruction*, and the Book of Proverbs (specifically Proverbs 22:17–24:22). Whereas Budge was certain that Proverbs were of Semitic origin, Erman<sup>3</sup> proposed they were the work of a Jewish scribe who plagiarized Egyptian ideas for his Hebrew audience.

Old Testament scholars responded to Erman’s idea, producing a flood of journal articles which competed among themselves to produce further parallels and emendations. For example, Gressman<sup>4</sup> in 1923 and 1924 wrote that Proverbs 22:17–24:22 was written in thirty sections in exactly the same manner as *Instruction*.

Not everyone agreed; Griffith<sup>5</sup> considered that the evidence pointed to the proverbial literature of the Near East having no specific national boundaries, and that both Egyptian and Hebrew authors had drawn from a common fund of wisdom material. Other dissenting voices such as Herzog<sup>6</sup> were virtually ignored by academia. On the other hand, Gardiner<sup>7</sup> wrote that there was ‘complete unanimity’ on the idea that Proverbs owed its existence to *Instruction*. Gardiner’s words offered comfort to those committed to destroying the trustworthiness of the Bible. Further pressure on the veracity of the Bible came in 1951, when Baumgartner

suggested that the ‘common source of wisdom material’ idea had been abandoned, claiming that:

“... the theory that Amenemope is original [sic] of Proverbs 22:17–23:11 has now been generally accepted [modern evolutionists use exactly the same language when attacking creationists]. The attempt to dispute this historical connection between the two texts, or to trace both back to an earlier Hebrew collection of proverbs had been given up.”<sup>8</sup>

Helck wrote:

“... that Proverbs 22:17–23:11 is largely dependent on the Teaching of Amenemope is now generally accepted.”<sup>9</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the consensus among academia was that an unknown Hebrew scribe, or scribes, had copied and modified earlier Egyptian wisdom writing, and presented this as the Bible’s Book of Proverbs. This consensus has remained largely unchallenged. Their method is the same as that used to cast doubt on the truth of the Noahic Flood, claiming it was plagiarized from the earlier Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (discussed and refuted in the creationist literature<sup>10</sup>).

In a *Tyndale Biblical Archaeology Lecture*, John Ruffle expresses views common to those influenced by the European ‘higher criticism’<sup>11</sup> of the Bible, and belief in the accuracy of the Conventional Egyptian Chronology (CEC).

“Few Egyptologists would dispute that the *Teaching* was cast in its present form by a scribe called Amenemope but Old Testament scholars are less happy about the ascriptions of the authorship of Proverbs to Solomon (Pr. 1:1, 10:1, 25:1) ... although it is difficult to see why this should be so. R.B.Y. Scott, is unhappy about Solomon’s authorship because, apart from the actual ascriptions in the Book of Proverbs the ‘tradition’ rests on the description of his achievements in 1 Kings ... includes passages containing so many superlatives that they ‘must be

recognized as legendary by any sober historian' . . . . Perhaps part of the problem lies in the use of the word 'author'. It would, I believe, be quite unreasonable to argue that one man actually composed all the maxims to be found in this book and it is better to talk of a 'compiler' than an 'author', who assembled together a collection of current folk proverbs . . . ."<sup>12</sup>

Ruffle considers that "the Solomonic date for this enterprise is supported by stylistic and linguistic parallels in the Canaanite and Ugaritic literature of the late Bronze Age". The evolutionary Three-Age System (TAS) to which Ruffle appeals is a favoured archaeological dating system and is no friend of Bible history, but a much used tool for creating antibiblical proofs.<sup>13</sup>

The well-known archaeologist Albright was not a biblical literalist. He fostered the idea that the religion of the biblical Israelites had *evolved* from polytheism to monotheism,<sup>14</sup> an idea in full accord with the documentary hypothesis.<sup>15</sup> Since his death in 1971, Albright's legacy has come under increasing scrutiny, and doubts about his methods and conclusions have arisen, yet he is often cited in the literature.

Dever, also a biblical archaeologist, wrote that Albright's central thesis has:

"... been overturned, partly by further advances in Biblical criticism, but mostly by the continuing archaeological research of younger Americans and Israelis to whom he himself gave encouragement and momentum . . . . The irony is that, in the long run, it will have been the newer 'secular' archaeology that contributed the most to Biblical studies, not 'Biblical archaeology'."<sup>16</sup>

Dever explains where he stands in all of this:

"I am not reading the Bible as Scripture. . . . I am in fact not even a theist. My view all along—and especially in the recent books—is first that the biblical narratives are indeed 'stories,' often fictional and almost always propagandistic, but that here and there they contain some valid historical information."<sup>17</sup>

"Archaeology as it is practiced today must be able to challenge, as well as confirm, the Bible stories. Some things described there really did happen, but others did not. The Biblical narratives about Abraham, Moses, Joshua and Solomon probably reflect some historical memories of people and places, but the 'larger than life' portraits of the Bible are unrealistic and contradicted by the archaeological evidence."<sup>18</sup>

Dever's words betray a deep dislike for the Bible. If some of the book of Proverbs' words, for example, can be argued to be of human authorship rather than divine, the infallibility of the Bible is compromised. In Dever's last quote, above, he concludes that some events in the Bible are true and others untrue. With Abraham, Moses, Joshua and Solomon reduced to little more than fairy tales, the very heart of the Bible is destroyed.

Lichtheim<sup>19</sup> wrote of a consensus among scholars, that there is *no priority of the Hebrew text*, nor a common lost Semitic text, but a 'literary relationship' between the *Instruction* and the Book of Proverbs. She wrote that:

"... it can hardly be doubted that the author of Proverbs was acquainted with the Egyptian work and borrowed from it."

Lichtheim points to this proposed literary relationship as being most obvious in Proverbs 22:17–24:22. Here the "remarkable similarity of ideals and ideas" is felt to be the closest and the examples most numerous.

### Exegesis confronts eisegesis

What the Hebrew of Proverbs 25:1 plainly states is that the proverbs which follow (i.e. chapters 25–31) are all attributable to Solomon and no one else. Furthermore, Hezekiah was responsible for organizing the transcription of these proverbs and this event took place around two centuries after Solomon's time. The Bible is quite clear about this, even down to the grammatical details. The verb translated as 'copied out' is קִיָּא *athaq*<sup>20</sup> and is in the Hiphil perfect. Hiphil is the causative of the Qal stem of a verb and as a result, in the Hiphil perfect, one sees the subject (in this case Hezekiah) causing the action of the verb, yet not directly performing the act itself. In a lot of cases, if we precede the Qal form of a verb with *to cause to*; *to make to*, we understand the true action taking place. Using the Qal stem and King David as the subject of the verb, we have, for example, David *reigned* over Israel; using the Hiphil stem of the same verb, we have God *caused* David *to reign* over Israel. Thus in Proverbs 25:1, Hezekiah *caused* his men *to transcribe* more of Solomon's proverbs.

There are some 861 pieces of advice plus proverbs written down in Proverbs 1–29 inclusive—less than 29% of the 3,000 mentioned in 1 Kings 4:32. Another problem for those wishing to press the notion of parallelisms between Proverbs and *Instruction* is that the present chapter and verse notation system came into being with the publication of the *Geneva Bible* in 1560.

To discover which source has priority, three key elements need to be studied:

1. a secure date for both sources must be established
2. how does each source fit in the historical timeline? (I.e. if the CEC is correct, there may be a case for priority being given to *Instruction*; if the CEC requires a downward revision, priority must be given to Proverbs.)
3. are Proverbs the original thoughts of Solomon, or did he draw on pre-existent funds of wisdom writings from several Ancient Near Eastern societies?

Three secular dating systems are used in attempting to prove that *Instruction* has priority over Solomon's Proverbs: the Conventional Egyptian Chronology (CEC); archaeology's iconic Three-Age system (TAS), i.e. Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages; and Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* (History of Egypt). However, in recent years, all of these have been called into question from both secular and creationist sources.

The following section shows what happens after critics dispute biblical truth, and in one unfortunate case, what happens to God's Word when compromisers deliberately change the original meaning and thrust of the Proverbs passage mentioned above.

### Chronological tug-of-war

The creationist literature has, over the past couple of decades presented a number of works from many authors challenging the validity of the CEC. Questions have quite rightly been asked about the placement of ancient Israel in secular-framed history where the CEC has been used as the historical absolute.

According to a significant number of biblical archeologists, Solomon lived in the impoverished Early Iron Age (EI IIA), rather than the affluent Late Bronze Age (LBA).<sup>21</sup> Under the CEC, Amenemope is placed in the Ramesside Period of the New Kingdom, which is conventionally dated between 1292 and 1070 BC. And an Israeli archeologist, Finkelstein, has moved Solomon from the LBA to the EI IIA, effectively challenging the Bible chronology in the process.<sup>22</sup>

However, there is much evidence coming to light through the investigations of some Egyptologists, who are thinking outside the constraints of the CEC, that the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>23</sup> was in power in Egypt during the latter part of the United Monarchy Period in Israel. This has obvious ramifications for the CEC since, for example, the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty must move over 300 years closer to the birth of Jesus Christ. Since history is not composed of periods of activity punctuated by convenient 'dark age' vacuums, the remainder of the Ramesside Period must move by the same amount; this includes the life and times of Amenemope and his *Instruction*. Amenemope is placed around 1100 BC in the CEC, yet in my revised chronology he is placed around 760 BC; this is about four decades before Hezekiah's time. Assuming that Solomon wrote down Proverbs by year ten of his reign, he and Amenemope are separated by exactly two centuries. On that basis, Solomon's first collection of Proverbs has priority over Amenemope's *Instruction*. There is no comfort for objectors who invoke Hezekiah's input of Solomon's second collection of proverbs: these too were written down originally by Solomon, so although Amenemope precedes Hezekiah, *Instruction* is still secondary to Proverbs. Hezekiah was simply adding to Proverbs from a fund of sayings that already existed two centuries earlier.

### Wrong starting points

In *The Dawn of Conscience*,<sup>24</sup> Breasted devoted many pages to interpreting what he saw as *Instruction's* philosophical content and made a direct comparison between this and Solomon's Proverbs. Breasted was heavily influenced by Erman's antibiblical consensus, unquestioningly

**Table 1.** Known surviving texts of Amenemope's *Instruction* with CEC dates on the left.<sup>30</sup>

Dates BC	Dynasties	Fragment	Type	Lines
1069–712	21–22	Stockholm MM 18416	Papyrus	191–257
1069–712	21–22	Louvre E. 17173	Tablet	034–037
1000–900	late 21–early 22	Cairo 1840	Ostrakon	047–066
945–712	22	Medinet Habu	Graffito	001
747–525	25–26	Turin 6237	Tablet	470–500
747–525	25–26	Moscow I 1 ♂ 324	Tablet	105–115
747–525	25–26	Turin Suppl. 4661	Tablet	001
600–500	late 26–early 27	British Museum 10474	Papyrus	001–551

accepting Erman's 10<sup>th</sup>–century BC date for the composition of *Instruction*. Breasted confirmed this when he wrote:

“We now know that the Wisdom [*Instruction*] of Amenemope was translated into Hebrew, it was read by Hebrews, and an important part of it found its way into the Old Testament.”

This fact was recognized by:

“... all Old Testament scholars of any weight or standing.”<sup>25</sup>

Breasted considered it 'obvious' that Amenemope had heavily influenced the biblical authors of the Books of Moses, Job, Samuel, and Jeremiah.<sup>26</sup> Despite Breasted's confident inference that the connection between *Instruction* and Proverbs was obvious, there were, and still remain, many scholarly dissenters to his view.

In 1934, Suys published an essay on the so-called theology of Amenemope.<sup>27</sup> In it he compared *Instruction* with other Egyptian texts of the same genre for any similarities, and concluded that although *Instruction* showed evidence of progression of Egyptian thought regarding concepts such as a transcendent deity and heightened awareness of morality, it could never be construed as monotheism.

Four years later, McGlinchey wrote a dissertation<sup>28</sup> on *Instruction*, in which he responded competently to Breasted's claims by conducting a detailed comparison of *Instruction* with Proverbs; not only the so-called *Words of the Wise* in Proverbs 22–24, but the remainder also. Although there appeared to be similarities of thought between the two works, McGlinchey noticed the same resonances in a number of other books in the Bible, all of a greater antiquity than *Instruction* or Proverbs. His conclusion was that no single Egyptian work such as *Instruction* could influence such a disparate group of Hebrew works. In McGlinchey's view it was far more likely that “... the influence had been from Israel to Egypt.”<sup>29</sup>

### Textual witnesses

In table 1 the chronology was assumed to be valid by the majority of scholars. In recent years increasing evidence has revealed a multitude of problems associated with the CEC as it presently stands. If the CEC represents the true history

timeline, then *Instruction* has chronological priority over Proverbs. The argument on priority turns against *Instruction* when the CEC is correctly adjusted to account for events such as the plundering of Jerusalem by Shishak, considered by increasing numbers of scholars to have been a Ramesside pharaoh (precisely the period assigned to Amenemope). Consequently, rather than preceding the time of Solomon, Amenemope and his *Instruction* appear centuries later than the accepted secular dates.

### Smoke and mirrors

Magicians can make things appear to be real without being so: the scholarly equivalent of such illusion tricks are easier to perform than people might imagine.

When it comes to the alleged synchronisms between the two works under discussion here, one way to mislead is to set out both Proverbs and *Instruction* as seamless units without any verse or line information. The impression given is that the *Instruction* passage is identical in structure to that of Proverbs. In figure 3 this sleight-of-hand is revealed, for while Proverbs is quoted from the Bible correctly, the same cannot be said for *Instruction*. Amenemope's work is constructed in clear sections (see table 2):

In essence, the prologue contains 46 lines of text, subdivided into three sections: section one explains the book; section two explains who the author is; section three explains who the *Instruction* is aimed at. Following the prologue is the *Instruction* module containing 475 lines: the entire work contains approximately 4,100 words.

### The '2% trick'

In table 3 the number of words used in the *Instruction* column total 80; 80 words as a percentage of 4,000 equals 2%. The Prologue, Author, and addressee sections containing 46 lines are ignored and the 'proof' begins with the first three lines of Chapter 1, followed by line 8; then it passes back to the previously ignored Author section of the Prologue where lines 7, 1, and 30 (in that order) are used; then an astonishing leap over the Addressee section, and most of chapters one through 29, to lines one and two in chapter 30, before returning to the now distant Author section, lines 5 and 6. Scholars and various authors have cut and pasted 2% of *Instruction* by taking 80 words out of their original context. Whether this can be interpreted as honest scholarship/authorship is quite another matter.

### Compromise destroys

Truth destroyers of the Bible are not a recent phenomenon; neither are they confined to the secular. The Catholic Church released the New American Bible (NAB); it contains a new translation of Psalms, the Song of Songs, and of particular interest here, the Book of Proverbs. For those aware of the full discussion about *Instruction* and its alleged relationship to the Book of Proverbs, it is certain that the NAB translation of the "Words of the Wise" in Proverbs 22:17–24:22 was heavily influenced by the aforesaid discussion. Most striking of all, the new translation has the name of Amenemope inserted into the biblical text at Proverbs 22:19.<sup>31</sup> The most accepted translation of the Hebrew for this verse (19) reads: "That your trust may be in Yahweh, I teach you this day, even you." The second half of the verse was seen as problematic

**Table 2.** Breakdown of Amenemope's *Instruction*.

The Prologue					
Book	12 lines	Author	19 lines	Addressee	15 lines
The Teaching					
Ch. 1.	12 lines	Ch. 2.	24 lines	Ch. 3.	10 lines
Ch. 4.	12 lines	Ch. 5.	16 lines	Ch. 6.	36 lines
Ch. 7.	26 lines	Ch. 8.	16 lines	Ch. 9.	36 lines
Ch. 10.	12 lines	Ch. 11.	22 lines	Ch. 12.	10 lines
Ch. 13.	16 lines	Ch. 14.	10 lines	Ch. 15.	12 lines
Ch. 16.	18 lines	Ch. 17.	18 lines	Ch. 18.	19 lines
Ch. 19.	12 lines	Ch. 20.	22 lines	Ch. 21.	18 lines
Ch. 22.	14 lines	Ch. 23.	8 lines	Ch. 24.	8 lines
Ch. 25.	13 lines	Ch. 26.	16 lines	Ch. 27.	12 lines
Ch. 28.	6 lines	Ch. 29.	10 lines	Ch. 30.	11 lines

**Table 3.** Contrasting the Bible truth with the secular illusion.

Proverbs (Masoretic)	<i>Instruction</i>
<b>22:17</b> Stretch your ear and hear the words of the wise; and set your heart to My knowledge;	<b>Chapter 1.1, 1.2</b> Give your ears to hear what is said, Give your heart to their interpretation.
<b>22:18</b> for they are pleasant when you keep them within you; they shall all be fixed together on your lips;	<b>Chapter 1.3, 1.8</b> Beneficial is putting them in your heart, That they be a mooring post for your tongue.
<b>22:19</b> so that your trust may be in Jehovah, I caused you to know today.	<b>Author 7, 1, 30</b> To cause him to enter the way of life, The instruction ... [of] ... Amenemope
<b>22:20</b> Have I not written to you the third time [i.e. previously] with counsels and knowledge;	<b>Chapter 30.1, 30.2</b> See for yourself these 30 chapters; They are pleasant, they instruct.
<b>22:21</b> to cause you to know the verity of the words of truth; to return words of truth to those who send you?	<b>Author 5, 6</b> To know how to refute a complaint to the one who speaks it, To turn back an accusation upon the one who sends it.

**Table 4.** The bold italic emphasis in the NAB indicates the inserted words of men.

NAB: Proverbs 22:17–21	NKJV: Proverbs 22:17–21
22:17 The sayings of the wise: Incline your ear, and hear my words, and apply your heart to my doctrine;	22:17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge;
22:18 For it will be well if you keep them in your bosom, if they are ready on your lips.	22:18 for it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; let them all be fixed upon your lips.
22:19 That your trust may be in the LORD, <b><i>I make known to you the words of Amen-em-Ope.</i></b>	22:19 So that your trust may be in the LORD; I have instructed you today, even you.
22:20 Have I not written <b><i>for you the “Thirty,”</i></b> <b><i>with</i></b> counsels and knowledge,	22:20 Have I not written to you excellent things Of counsels and knowledge,
22:17 <b><i>To teach you truly</i></b> <b><i>how to give a dependable report to the one who</i></b> <b><i>sends you?</i></b>	22:21 That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, That you may answer words of truth to those who send you?
<small>The New American Bible, Oxford University Press, 2005.</small>	<small>New King James Version, Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1991.</small>

by scholars, and translators and exegetes had been wrestling with it for centuries. The solution chosen by the NAB translators apparently takes the Hebrew consonants for “this day, even you” i.e. היום אף־אתה *hywm p’th* to be a garbled version of the consonants for אִמְנ־יִפְתִּי *imn-ipt*,<sup>32</sup> thereby yielding the rendering: “That your trust may be in the Lord, I make known to you the words of Amen-em-Ope.”<sup>33</sup> (See table 4).

The critics begin their main assault at Proverbs 22:17, 18. The Proverbs quoted is the New King James Version translation; the *Instruction*, with relevant reference points is placed alongside the Proverbs for easy comparison (table 5).

At first glance it might be argued that there are similarities between the two writings, but this is illusory and is due to an imagined chronological synchronism between the two sources. That both begin with the command to use one’s ears and hear what is being said suggests merely that both writings were intended to be read aloud as instruction to an audience. Phrases like “*incline your ear*” and “*give me your ears*” are common figures of speech which appear in many cultures, both ancient and modern. This is a standard means of getting the audiences’ auditory attention.

When the Hebrew author uses כִּוְּן *kuwn* in the Niphal, it means “to be firmly established (in the moral sense)”. By being firmly established in the heart, the recipient of the wisdom is expected to pass it on to the next generation, by speaking the words into being. Contrast this with the Egyptian idea that the words ‘be bolted’ (i.e. immovably fixed) in the heart, since they were not intended for anyone but the recipient; so that when the recipient was confronted by a heated exchange (whirlwind of words), his tongue would be firmly tied up so as not to reply in kind. It is clear that this example of a parallelism offered by the Bible critics is no parallelism at all.

Finally, a number of authors have suggested several emendations to the Proverbs passage above, most notably Gressman<sup>34</sup> who suggested that יָחַד in verse 18 ought to be emended to כִּיתֵד ‘like a tent peg’ solely on the basis of the *Instruction*’s Egyptian *n’yt* ‘a mooring post’. The link between ‘tent peg’ and ‘mooring post’ is tenuous at best:

Egyptian culture was well acquainted with all matters nautical, including the use of the analogy ‘mooring *post*’ for *binding your tongue securely to the words*; the tongue was recognized as the part of the body that could drift off into all sorts of trouble unless properly secured to the solidity of wisdom. The Egyptian word *n’yt* refers to a post within the cockpit of a boat, and the boat becomes the analogy of the tongue. Thus when a ‘torrent of words’ arises against this man, because of the secure

anchor the wisdom sayings are supposed to give him, he at least can *hold a civil tongue*.

The inevitable result of these unwarranted critical emendations is shown by Williams<sup>35</sup> as he takes this line of thought to its logical conclusion (table 6).

Williams’ three emendations overturn the original intention of God’s Word. No longer are these words the words of the ‘wise’, rather they are reduced to merely someone’s words (*my words*); just another opinion, in fact. The Hebrew for ‘apply’ שִׁיִּית *shiyth* (Qal imperfect) implies *laying hold of*, where the listener is urged to take the wise words deep into the eternal part of his being, the heart, so that they become part of him. Williams changes this important activity to little

**Table 5.** Literary structure between Proverbs and *Instruction* contrasted.

Proverbs 22:17,18	Teachings I:1–8
Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge; for it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; let them all be fixed upon your lips.	Give your ears, hear the sayings, give your heart to understand them. It is good to put them in your heart, woe to him who neglects them. Let them rest in the casket of your belly, may they be bolted in your heart. When there rises a whirlwind of words, they will be a mooring-post for your tongue.

**Table 6.** Williams’ version (left) and the original New King James Version (right).

“Give ear and hear <i>my words</i> Set your mind to <i>know them</i> For it is fine that you keep them within you That they be fixed as a <i>tent peg</i> on your lips” <sup>36</sup>	“Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge; for it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; let them all be fixed upon your lips.”
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more than learning by rote. Williams' attempted analogy using a 'tent peg' to parallel the Egyptian 'mooring post' fails precisely because he deletes the all-important Hebrew word כּוּנַן *kuwn* (Niphal imperfect), and replaces the Hebrew *securely fixed* with the clumsy analogy of a 'tent peg' in comparison to the elegant Egyptian 'mooring post'. The difference between the fourth lines of the respective wisdom teachings is that the Egyptian version uses metaphor (a very common practice of the Egyptians); the Hebrew does not. It is clear that Williams has no scholarly or ethical basis for such emendations, and the only conclusion is that he deliberately set out to change the Bible's words. Had he read on a little further in Proverbs, he would have come across this inconvenient admonition: "Do not add to his [God's] Words, lest he rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6).

The entire passage as translated in the NAB raises grave concerns. By comparison the NKJV translation closely follows the Hebrew text. Further examination reveals just how far the NAB translators have changed the import of God's word.

In verse 17 the NAB uses the word *doctrine*, whereas the NKJV uses the word *knowledge*: the Hebrew word is דַּעַת *da'ath* (Strong's H1847 = knowledge). Of the 93 occurrences of *da'ath*, 82 are rendered by Strong's as 'knowledge', but none as 'doctrine'.<sup>37</sup>

In verse 18 the NAB uses the word *ready*, whereas the NKJV uses the word *fixed*: the Hebrew uses the word כּוּנַן *kuwn* (verb) (H3559), rendered in the Niphal imperfect, meaning, in context, *to direct toward* (in the moral sense): *kuwn* can also mean *to fix*, or *to make ready* (both are verbs). The NAB translation, however, uses the word *ready*, an adjective, meaning *prepared for use or action*; this idea is negated by the NAB translators' use of פִּיתָד 'like a tent peg'.

Have the NAB translators realized the significance of inserting "I make known to you the words of Amen-em-Ope"? The context of the verse changes from putting trust in the absolute wisdom of the Lord—יְהוָה *Yēhovah*, to putting trust in the non-biblical wisdom of *Amen-in-Karnak*, for that is what the name Amenemope means: the reader of the NAB translation is required to trust 'the nameless god' of Egypt; none other than Amun (table 7).

The Masoretic text for the same passage reads the same as modern translations except that in verse 20 there is mention of "third time" with regard to "counsels and knowledge" (table 8).

### Conclusion

The apparent conflict over the question of priority is resolved once the over-extended CEC is reduced. Hitherto problematic individuals and their activities can feasibly be placed three centuries later, thus reducing the overall Egyptian chronology by around 15%.

**Table 7.** How the illusion works for compromising biblical scholars. Note the jumbled nature of the *Instruction* quotes.

Proverbs (NAB translation)	Instruction
22:17 Give ear and listen, Apply your heart to my teaching;	Chapter 1.1, 1.2 Give your ears to hear what is said, Give your heart to their interpretation.
22:18 For it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart, All of them ready on your lips.	Chapter 1.3, 1.8 Beneficial is putting them in your heart, That they be a mooring post for your tongue.
22:19 That your trust may be in Yahweh, I teach you the words of Amenemope:	Author 7, 1, 30 To cause him to enter the way of life, The instruction ... [of] ... Amenemope
22:20 Have I not written for you the Thirty With counsel and knowledge?	Chapter 30.1, 30.2 See for yourself these 30 chapters; They are pleasant, they instruct.
22:21 To teach you reliable words, So you may answer words of truth to those who question you.	Author 5, 6 To know how to refute a complaint to the one who speaks it, To turn back an accusation upon the one who sends it.

**Table 8.** The Masoretic translation

22:17 Stretch your ear and hear the words of the wise; and set your heart to My knowledge;
22:18 for they are pleasant when you keep them within you; they shall all be fixed together on your lips;
22:19 so that your trust may be in Jehovah, I caused you to know today.
22:20 Have I not written to you the third time [i.e. previously/before] <sup>38</sup> with counsels and knowledge;
22:21 to cause you to know the verity of the words of truth; to return words of truth to those who send you?

And where did Amenemope stand in all of this? He mentions deity in his work, but what kind of theist was Amenemope? All Egyptian wisdom literature pointed towards producing the ideal man.<sup>39</sup> *Instruction* is very different in form to Proverbs as it divides a man's experiences into two realms: inner man and outside world. Amenemope's ideal man lives and moves in the outer realm, where fate and destiny rule his life. He may make plans but it is one of any number of deities who will ultimately decide his fate. The man can, however, seek solace in his inner man where his heart becomes the temple of the supreme deity. So could Amenemope have been a monotheist? He refers to 'god', 'lord of all', and 'the nameless god'; he also names specific deities: Ra, Eye of Ra, Khnum, Thoth, Shay, Renenet, Aten, Wadjet (the uraeus serpent), Apophis, and Maat. In keeping with New Kingdom Amun theology, these deities and many others are manifestations of Amenemope's 'nameless god', one yet millions; which draws parallels to the beliefs of the

New Age and Hinduism. Amenemope was a henotheist; god is one in essence yet millions in manifestation.

It now appears that the Egyptian Amenemope plagiarized Solomon and not the other way around. The Bible makes it clear (1 Kings 4:30–31) that Israel’s neighbouring nations, notably Phoenicia, Sheba, and of course Egypt, were all aware of Solomon’s greatness. Any so-called parallelisms between Proverbs and *Instruction* point to Egypt being influenced by Solomon, not the other way round. But the greatest tragedy is surely the replacing of the wise words of the sole source of Absolute Wisdom, God, with the ‘*Instruction*’ of a fallen man.<sup>40</sup>

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