

# Water metaphors and polyvalence in the *Book of Proverbs*

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This article argues that Proverbs 18:4 contains an exceptionally rich use of water as metaphors in sapiential literature. At the same time, the verse illustrates the multivalent applicability of a single proverb. Israel's natural environment is shortly described as pictured in the biblical texts, suggesting the interplay of water and dry land in the ancient Near East. Water and dryness have ambivalent functions, as both are necessary and both can be dangerous. In order to understand Proverbs 18:4, a short overview of water in ancient Near Eastern texts is generally given and the significance of the multivalent application of representative proverbs is illustrated. Coming to Proverbs 18:4, an interpretation is offered showing a potential of various differing understandings of the water metaphor concentrated in a single proverb. Although such a proverb now exists in a written literary context, it can be used in various contexts, and each time be applied differently in its own right, but with equal validity.

**Contribution:** It is argued that the multifarious use of water as a literary motif in Proverbs entails that both its explicit and its implied use can function literally, metaphorically and even as metaphonemy, with variegated valid meanings whether in individual proverbs by themselves or as part of larger literary contexts.

**Keywords:** water; proverbs; polyvalence; metaphor; metaphonemy.

## Introduction

Running water found in springs or streams was exceptionally important in the Ancient Near East,<sup>1</sup> which is a relatively dry region. Therefore, human settlements were often built in the vicinity of fountains, as is evident from numerous place names prefixed by עֵין [Fountain of ...], such as En-Dor and En-Gedi.<sup>2</sup> This testifies how indispensable springs were for human life and society. Israel's consciousness of the importance of water for life is confirmed in the narratives of its past, for instance, the stories of the separation of the patriarch Abraham (who at this stage of the narrative was still called Abram) and his nephew Lot and of the expulsion of Hagar and her son Ishmael. The magnanimous Abraham allowed Lot to claim the Jordan Valley because it had 'ample water', while he himself was content with scarcer water supplies in the southwestern land and steppe (Gn 13:8–12). Hagar and her son Ishmael suddenly found themselves unprovided for in the wilderness. Unable to countenance the languishing little boy perishing of thirst, she abandoned him in the desert and was only aided by the miraculous appearance of a life-saving well. A saga about a mother doing such a thing is only conceivable in a dangerously arid land. This portrays the heritage of the Abrahamic offspring as arid land, which has remained the case, so that even in the equally dehydrated – if careful – verbalisation of experts, it is still maintained that 'Israel and its neighbours are located in areas that are identified as water scarce regions' (Tal 2010:26).

Several essays in a volume on thinking of water in the Ancient Near East (Ben-Zvi & Levin 2014) are relevant to the imagery found in well-proverbs as well as other texts cited here. Ehud Ben-Zvi (2014:20) finds Proverbs 11:25b (he who waters is really one who teaches), a case that 'clearly evokes an image of "watering" ... while at the same time conveying a sense of teaching.' This is also the case in Proverbs 13:14. In an essay about the significance of water for prophecy, Martti Nissinen (2014:30) points to the global occurrence of water as a metaphor for life, but also refers to sapiential texts. He thinks that the presentation of Yahweh as the 'fountain of living water' in Jeremiah 2:13 and 17:13 sounds like 'an apotheosis of the "fountain of life" found in Proverbs

1.Cf. Anthonioz (2014:62) for an example in an inscription from the Aššurnāṣirpal II palace.

2.Cf. *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* II s.v. 488–499.

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such as 10:11 and Psalms'. In the same volume, Stéphanie Anthonioz (2014:49–75) surveys the motif of 'waters of abundance' in texts from Sumer and Akkad and right through to the Amorite Middle Euphrates and Assyria. As for the Old Testament, she shows that the motif of gushing water in Mesopotamia was the primary image of life. Citing not only the pertinent Mesopotamian myths but also royal inscriptions (Hammurabi, Yahdun-Lim of Mari, Aššur-ballit, Adad-nêrârî and Aššurnasirpal II), she shows how this life is mediated to the people by water 'flowing continually through the king who is responsible before the gods for that gift' (Anthonioz 2014:57–62). For Israel, banishment from the well-watered Garden of Eden meant that the only mediating agency of God's gift had become the Torah (cf Dt 11:10–17) instead of a human king as in Mesopotamia. She confirms her analysis (Anthonioz 2014:66–74) by incorporating the prophets Deutero-Isaiah (cf Is 41:18; 51:3–4), Ezekiel (cf Ezk 47) and Zechariah (cf Zch 14:8–9). All of this establishes convincingly that the flowing waters mediating life through the king in Mesopotamia travelled west and became a motif no longer tied to the king, but to God and his Torah. Although unlike Ben-Zvi and Nissinen, she does not incorporate wisdom texts in her investigation, I would suggest that her results from the Near Eastern background are highly germane to the fountain imagery in Proverbs. My proposal is that it is now plausible that the prophetic texts are not so much an apotheosis of the Proverbs texts, but rather that the latter are the sapiential manifestation of the same pattern that she has uncovered in the ancient Near East generally, including the Pentateuch and Prophets. Mediating wise words and righteousness is the sapiential manifestation of expressing the necessary obedience to Torah, so that Yahweh will provide the life-giving water (Dt 11:10ff). Not the wise man personally, but the words of his mouth are the living fountain mediating life.

Such talk of water and its life-giving properties, however, presupposes the existence of dry land. Even before there could be the talk of the blessing of abundant water, the primeval waters had to be separated out so that dry land could appear in order to make the world inhabitable in the first place and begin a lasting reciprocity of water and dry land (Gn 1:9–10). Only then could the blessing of primeval irrigation begin to be a blessing necessary for life (Gn 2:5–6). The interplay of water and dry land is the prerequisite for life as celebrated not only in the narratives of Israel but also in the lyrical (e.g. Ps 104:10–14) and prophetic (e.g. Is 48:21; Jr 2:6; Hs 13:5) traditions. Ezekiel's splendid vision of water as the major mark of a glorious future flowing from the temple for the healing and cultivation of the land (Ezk 47) is the culmination of a deep yearning for the irrigation of the deserts (cf Ps 126:4; Is 35:6).

A final point before turning to the Book of Proverbs: Although the positive appreciation of water is prominent, it is only one side of its character. Water can also be dangerous as a force of nature, and precisely, therefore, it can also be seen as a divine punishment, the classic example of which is provided by the

story of the flood (Gn 6–8; cf Is 8:7–8; 30:28). No wonder Israel looked upon the sea as a constant threat, its armies relentlessly attacking the divinely set borders of the habitable land (Ps 104:6–9; Job 38:8–11). The threatening aspect of water can be used as a metaphor on a local or personal scale (Ps 69:2–3; 124:4–5; Jn 2). But also the absence of water in the form of drought can be applied as a chastisement in the hand of God (Dt 28:23–24; 1 Ki 17–18; Jr 3:3; 14:21–22; Am 4:7–8).

## Water imagery in the *Book of Proverbs*

The motif of water provides a rich source for the conveying of sapiential teaching and is found all over the book. The following discussion offers a representative selection.

(a) **Proverbs 5:15** is an aphorism in the context of a longer text:

Drink water from your own cistern,  
running water from your own well.

This is a proverb from the injunction genre. It can stand by itself and be meaningful in its own right. As it stands in the context of verses 15–20, it is clearly part of an admonition on sexual satisfaction within marriage. The thrust is that sexual satisfaction is to be sought with one's own wife, not with other women (v. 20), and that one's wife is not for sharing (v. 17). There are notorious difficulties in the passage, but the salient point for our purpose is the fact that here we evidently have a metaphor in the text and can only read it as a metaphor because the literary context makes another reading impossible. From verse 15 to verse 18 a string of water metaphors (cf Klopper 2002:184–187) are used, explicitly placed in a parallelism with 'wife' (v. 18):

Blessed be your fountain,  
and rejoice in the wife of your youth.

So we have no choice; the passage's concepts from the sphere of water (drink, water, cistern, well, springs, streams, fountain) are pinpointed by the context, which then moves on to another group of metaphors from the world of animals, again explicitly identifying the hind and the doe with the youthful wife as opposed to other women (vv. 19–20; cf Can 2:7, 3:5). But verse 15 is a typical proverb that, despite now being part of a literary unit, can just as well stand by itself in an aphoristic collection. It is therefore a saying typical of those folk sayings that should be understood metaphorically because by their very nature they 'say something metaphorically about human beings, the world, or the ways and concerns of human beings in the world' (Sandoval 2006:11). Consider this with the help of the example before us.

Verse 15 can very well be understood literally and still say things about the concerns of people in the world. For instance, in a dry land, it is unwise to become dependent on others for water supplies. Therefore, the wise man should see to it that he has his own water resources. The saying would be an injunction to economic independence and would focus

on the interests of the individual spoken to. Alternatively if the addressee does have his own resources, he should not avail himself of those owned by other people. That would be an admonition in the spirit of Nathan's parable (2 Sm 12:1–6), and it would focus on the interests of society.

(b) **Proverbs 9:17** also applies water imagery in the service of a sexual ethic.

Stolen water is sweet,  
and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

From the given context, we know that the pithy saying is spoken by Dame Folly in order to lure unwise men to her. This in itself is metaphorical, as the imagery of public soliciting by a woman in the city is clear. It stands for folly luring simple men. As such it could be understood metaphorically for illicit sex (cf Waltke 2004:40, 445–446 and [on 29:17] 2005:145–146), but it could also be understood quite literally. The proverb by itself could be interpreted as an expression of the same logic used in Proverbs 20:17:

Bread gained by deceit is sweet  
but afterward the mouth is full of gravel.

Here the device of progressive parallelism is used to represent the consequences of theft by means of a metaphor for experiencing the consequences of deceitful gain, which are pleasant at the outset. In the context of 9:17, the suggestiveness of Dame Folly is clear and clearer still in the context of a collection of poems that includes Proverbs 2:16–19 on illicit sexual behaviour and the water imagery of Proverbs 5. But if we consider the proverb by itself, it can very well be understood literally. Drinking and eating what one has unlawfully gained obviously has a fascination, because it lures people so strongly that it can be said to always provide the additional thrill of adventure. The repetitive expression of the principle in the parallelism leaves no room for pointing out the consequence as in Proverbs 20:17. Therefore, there is a gap in the text, which has to be filled up by the hearer.<sup>3</sup> The suggestion of a powerful backlash that forces the hearer to consider the unpleasant effects awaiting the perpetrator cannot be overlooked. But Proverbs 9:17 mentions no absurd result and retains its suggestiveness even when read literally.

(c) **Proverbs 10:11** provides a conspicuous example of the water metaphor:

The mouth of a righteous man is a fountain of life,  
but the mouth of the wicked covers up violence.

The two clauses of the proverb form a syntactical chiasmus (predicate-subject, subject-predicate) and contain a metaphonymy, which is a metaphor combined with metonymy (Goossens 1995). If the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, then the mouth *stands for* speaking (metonymy) and simultaneously *is* a fountain (metaphor). Luchsinger (2010:288–289) says that 'mouth' stands for 'person', but the person is explicitly identified by its own noun [צדיק]; cf also

3. The same logic is found in the Arabic proverb, 'Anything forbidden is sweet' (cf Winton Thomas 1965:271–279).

13:14, where the fountain of life is not the wise person [חכם], but his teaching [תורה]. That means that the righteous speaks things that bring life. A source of water is a source of a life-giving commodity, therefore a necessity. In the same way, the words spoken by the righteous are conducive to and therefore necessary for life. As the righteous is a wise person, the water is wisdom, and wisdom brings life. The same idea is found in 13:14 where מקור חיים is applied to the teaching of the wise, which is equivalent to the words of the righteous. On the basis of the fact that 'the concepts of wisdom and righteousness evoked each other in the discourse of the community', Ben-Zvi (2014:19) cites 13:14 as an illustration of thinking of wisdom and closely related concepts in terms of water. For this reason, he finds it 'not surprising' that an expression such as 10:11a existed 'in the repertoire of the community.'

The explicative genitive 'fountain of life' must mean that the fountain [*nomen regens*] makes life [*nomen rectum*] possible. Where the expression מקור מים חיים is used, the middle word is in the absolute state and therefore cannot entail a second genitive to render 'water of life' (as in 14:27, where the fear of the Lord is said to be a fountain of life), but must mean living equals running water.

We encounter a parallelism in which the two verses impact each other:

V 11a		V 11b
righteous speaking	::	wicked speaking
brings life	→	[does not bring life]
[does not hide violence]	←	hides violence

The proverb thus contains a thorough contrast that can stand on its own feet. Speaking righteousness as a wise man does nourish life. But wicked speaking camouflages or covers up violence, which is the opposite of wisdom.

The power of speech in general and specifically the fountain metaphor in this verse are often commented upon in Jewish literature. Oesterley calls the figure of the fountain 'a favourite one among the Jews.' Citing Pirke Aboth, he shows that the identification of the wise words and Torah in the motif of water is also found in the rabbinic tradition, for example, in Pirke Aboth 2:10 and 6:1, where people studying the Torah are called a spring that does not stop flowing.

(d) In **Proverbs 11:25**, the water metaphor is impressively present, even if not expressly mentioned:

A person who blesses will be fattened,  
and one who refreshes will surely be refreshed himself.

The parallelism is complementary in that the two verbal sentences share metaphors from the agricultural sphere ('fatten' and 'give water') and because the general 'bless' of the first half is specified as 'refresh' in the second. The genitive נפש-ברכה ['person and/or soul of blessing'] is an objective genitive, indicating that the genitive [ברכה] is the object conveyed by the logical subject [נפש], so that the person

in question dispenses blessing. Whoever bestows blessing on others will be 'made fat'. The metaphor of fat connotes well-being (cf 13:4; 15:30; 28:25; Dt 31:20; Ps 23:5b) and is a specification of the (general) blessing dispensed, according to the first hemistich, to other people. Discussing water metaphors relevant for the portrayal of wisdom and learning in terms of water (cf 10:11; 13:14; 14:27), Ben-Zvi (2014:19–20) points to 'the double meaning of the root ירה, "water (as a verb)" and "teach"' and quotes verse 25b as an example, 'which clearly evokes an image of "watering" or "raining" while at the same time conveying a sense of teaching'. His interpretation of the proverb is thus that it 'asks the community to conceptualise teaching as "water," and the teacher as both a recipient and distributor of "water," that is, wisdom'.

We do not have to choose between the motifs of giving to drink and teaching because the two uses of ירה [give to drink and teach] suit the metaphor of water as wisdom admirably. Again the polyvalence of a proverb is manifested in a terse saying. The Masoretic pointing as well as the motif in the other proverbs quoted above fit quite well. This provides a corollary for the idea of both receiving and dispensing blessing, as proposed by Waltke for the first hemistich. It also links with the targumic and rabbinic view that teaching Torah brings learning not only to the pupils but also to the teacher himself. He who gives to drink (the wisdom of Torah) himself has his thirst for learning quenched (Riyqam). In this way, the complementing statements of both half-verses confirm and strengthen each other.

(e) **Proverbs 13:13–14** contains a proverb pair:

- 13 Who despises a word will be pledged by it,  
but who fears a precept, will be rewarded.  
14 The teaching of a wise man is a fountain of life  
to avoid the snares of death.

These two proverbs are not a unit in the sense of a composed couplet. Each can stand on its own, yet they are redacted together in close association, thereby each contributing to what both communicate. Verse 13 is a rather symmetric antithetic parallelism:

- Verse 13a: participle with noun object + passive imperfect  
Verse 13b: participle with noun object + passive imperfect

The next verse syntactically subsumes the second hemistich under the first. The first half contains the nominal main clause and the last half contains the final clause.

- Verse 14a: subject expressed by a subjective genitive + predicate by an objective genitive  
Verse 14b: final clause with infinitive and the preposition ל + object in an objective genitive

There are noticeable conceptual links between the two proverbs. The דבר [word], מצוה [precept] and the תורה [teaching] provide different words for the sapiential education imparted by the sages. The 'word' (v. 13a) is a

general indication of an oral dictum by the teacher, and the 'precept' (verse 13b) in the parallelism must be a synonym in the broad sense, that is, it must refer to something said by the teacher.

- |                     |    |                       |
|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| who despises        | :: | who fears or respects |
| will be kept liable | :: | will be rewarded.     |

According to verse 13, whoever despises the wise words will still remain bound by them. The verb חבל I (Qal bind, take in pledge) in the Niphal makes good sense. The word of the wise, once spoken, places the hearer under an obligation to which he will be pledged. On the contrary, who respects the spoken precept will be rewarded. In this case, the account is squared, whereas an unpaid account remains the liability of the one who discarded it (so Delitzsch 1874; Toy 1914; Plöger 1984; Meinhold 1991; Scherer 1999; Clifford 1999, Tuinstra 1996 and others). This interpretation is particularly supported by the parallelism between יחבל and ישלם – debit :: credit, owing payment :: receiving payment (Wildeboer 1897; Clifford 1999; Yoder 2009). It fits the thinking behind the deed-consequence nexus, which is not only found all over sapiential literature generally (both where it is affirmed and where it is questioned) but also is typical of this chapter specifically. According to Gemser, the parallelism of דבר [word] and מצוה [precept] calls to mind Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as general concepts of both sapiential and divine teaching (cf also 16:20), which is developed by Fuhs to suggest the inner unity of the formation of faith and conscience. McKane opposes the idea that it should be interpreted 'in the framework of Deuteronomy' and argues that the מצוה in sapiential usage indicates the authority of the utterances of the wisdom teacher and not of God. In turn, Lucas reacts to McKane's proposal by warning against overemphasising the distinction between sapiential and Deuteronomistic teaching because Proverbs suggests that the fatherly teaching is an extension of the divine command. Schipper carefully weighs the relevant arguments – not only the echoes of Deuteronomy 30 but also the Deuteronomistic idea that 'fear of the Lord' is the way in which one obeys the divine precepts (Dt 5:29; 6:2; 8:6; 13:4; 17:19; 28:58). Moreover, four of the seven other instances of ירה in Proverbs (3:7; 14:2; 24:21; 31:30, as opposed to 3:25; 14:16; 31:21) also have God as object. On the other hand, Proverbs 13 is the only chapter in the book in which יהוה is not explicitly mentioned, while sapiential education and the 'discipline' of the human teacher (cf v. 1) are central in the chapter. He reaches the convincing conclusion that the teaching by the human sage is indeed called 'Torah', as was the divine revelation to Moses, but in wisdom literature it lacks the 'nomistic overtone in the sense of the divine Law'. We do not need that sense – indeed, we do not need Deuteronomy – to understand 'Torah' in Proverbs, but the sapiential enterprise is not devoid of an order upheld by God.

Verse 14 uses a metaphor to express the advantages of accepting this Torah teaching. As the two verses now stand, edited together as they are, their mutual association influences their meaning. Paying attention to the sapiential words and having respect for the precepts expressed by them



(v. 13) entail a life-giving reward (v. 14). As Perdue points out, מקור חיים [fountain of life] is a metaphor for sapiential teaching (cf 10:11). But at the same time, it denotes what that teaching brings about. It sustains life like water sustains all living things. Although verse 14 does not contain an antithesis, its second hemistich does contain an opposite metaphor. Over against the fountain that gives life, there are the snares that cause death. But because the latter is what those who drink from the fountain of life are *protected* from, the sense is the same.

(f) **Proverbs 18:4** is a polyvalent saying:

A polyvalent saying is not a clumsy or unintentionally unclear saying. This proverb is sometimes called ‘ambivalent’, which, in careful use, indicates an openness to interpretations in two opposing directions. But this proverb is open to more (*poly*) than two (*ambi*) interpretations that can be defended on the syntactic as well as the semantic levels.<sup>4</sup> The proverb consists of one stich (line) made up of two hemistichs (half-lines), each containing four rhythmic beats. But there is no conjunction between the two halves, which only occurs occasionally in the book. The Hebrew text is as follows:

מים עמוקים דברי פי־איש  
נחל נבע מקור חכמה

How this is to be translated and interpreted depends on how one judges the syntax, which is a moot point. There is no conjunction at the beginning of the second hemistich and the verse may be read in diverse ways. It can be considered as one nominal sentence (Delitzsch 1874; Toy 1914; McKane 1977; Alter 2010, 2011; Meinhold 1991; Murphy 1998; Clifford 1999; Fuhs 2001; Fox 2009; Sæbø 2012):

The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters,  
a bubbling stream, a fountain of wisdom.

But it may also be read as two nominal sentences (Oesterley 1929; Gemser 1963; Plöger 1984; Ringgren 1966; Scott 1981; Whybray 1994; Heim [2013:427], Waltke 2005):

The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters;  
a fountain of wisdom is a bubbling stream.

There are several trajectories open to a range of differing applications appropriate for differing conditions.

The first option is to read the hemistichs as a continuous parallelism. Then, דברי פי־איש [the words of a man’s mouth] is the subject of the single nominal sentence and the rest is the predicate. In this case, the second hemistich provides two further images to interpret the image of the first hemistich. Thus, deep waters turn out to issue forth a bubbling stream by virtue of the water’s function as a fountain of wisdom. If that is so, the ‘man’ [איש] of the first half must be understood to be a wise man because the deep waters become a fountain of his wisdom. Any brook needs a fountain to come into

existence, and the fountain’s continued activity is necessary for the brook to keep flowing. As a continuous parallelism in one sentence, the proverb can be understood to say that words are beneficial, without denying that they can be strict or even harsh. Human pronouncements are difficult to make sense of and can also come from the sapiential arsenal of rebukes (cf 13:1, 18; 15:10, 12, 31f; Ec 7:5).

The second option is given by the possibility of reading the verse as two identically structured nominal sentences. Both begin with the predicate and end with the subject; in both cases, the subject is a genitive construction; in both hemistichs, the predicate consists of an undetermined noun and in both, the rhythmic pattern coincides with syntactic structure, *viz.* twice 2 plus 2 stress beats. The subject says something about the speaking of a human being in general [איש], not specifically of a *wise* man. As the predicate of the nominal sentence stands before the subject, it is the important aspect. What is important about human speech is that it has the quality of deep waters. The deep subterranean water, as opposed to a brook or a cistern, is difficult to access. As Proverbs 20:5 shows, its primary feature is that it takes a person with insight to reach it. Proverbs 18:4 thus refers to *profunditas*, not in the sense of erudition, but of inscrutability. What goes on in the human mind is like the water table: it is inscrutable. Without having to be wise, it is simply *terra incognita*, a well-known sapiential idea (14:10; 17:3; cf 16:1, 2, 9). Only God can plumb the human mind and fathom the heart (cf 15:11; 17:3; 1 Sm 16:7). Qoh 7:24 uses the concept of depth [עמק] to characterise as unfathomable whatever exists and does so parallel with רחוק [far] to question human knowledge of the essence of ‘anything that exists’, including the contents of others’ minds.

The message of the proverb is thus multi-sided: Therefore, if taken as one nominal sentence, only the *positive effect of words* is highlighted. The words spoken by a man are waters from a deep well that demands hard work to fathom, but proves to be a bubbling stream from a fount of wisdom. That means that the ‘man’ is a wise man. However, taken as two nominal sentences, the verse points out *both dimensions of human words*. Words spoken by any ‘man’ (human being) are too unplumbed to benefit from. But the second half-verse shows that, if the words originate in true wisdom, they are, by contrast, a bubbling stream of readily available and wholesome water.

## Outcome

Three of the proverbs we have studied use water as a metaphor for teaching. It means that wisdom is represented as water. In Proverbs 10:11, the spoken words of the righteous actually are a source of life, imbibed by the pupil who will be invigorated like Ishmael in the wilderness, whereas the words of the utterly unsapiential wicked impart violence. In Proverbs 11:25, he who refreshes and/or teaches [יריה] others is himself refreshed and taught by the enlivening water, as the rabbis received and applied the concept. According to 13:14, the teaching of the wise is expressly said to be a fountain of life and serves the purpose of avoiding the snares of death.

4. Cf the detailed discussion by Millar (2020:202–207).

Water as an erotic metaphor, both legitimate and illicit, occurs, respectively, in Proverbs 5:15 and 9:17. Still, in both cases, the proverbs can also be understood literally, in the first case as careful water management and in the second case as a metonymy for the lure of stolen property.

The water imagery of Proverbs 18:4 allows a multisided interpretation that thematises the *effort* of the sapiential enterprise, its life-sustaining *reward* as well as its *limits*. To penetrate the teaching of a wise man requires concentration, hard work and discipline; nonetheless, it is a fountainhead of life-giving water. But even the words spoken by ordinary people are hard to fathom, because only God knows the innermost recesses of the mind. And this is a basic insight of wisdom: wisdom is a deep understanding, requires effort and knows its limits.

## Dedication

This article is dedicated to Professor Johan Buitendag, who in my opinion, is one of the most important theologians in South Africa today. As an academic and as a church leader, he has done much to rectify the floundering course several of his predecessors had overseen in his denomination. He deserves the congratulation and gratitude of academia and church for what he has achieved – to which I now humbly add mine.

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### Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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