

A contribution from Proverbs and Daniel to reflection on Ecodomy

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Introduction

The publication of 'The Limits of Growth' (cf. Meadows et al. 1972) by a research team of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1972, caused a worldwide reaction. In theological circles it generated a new branch, that of ecological theology. Years of exploration and abuse of the earth are leading to an ecological crisis that has to be addressed by us. Solutions and suggestions on how to meet the crisis are to be provided by the church as well. This world is the only world we have and has to be cared for. As contextual theology and branch of ecological theology, the discipline of Ecodomy reflects on the way believers are to react to this crisis.

Ecodomy 'denotes the act of building or edifying' (Kok 2015:6 of 12). Ecodomy aims at informing and enlightening God's community of faith to live a full life in this world.

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Ecodomy consults different sources to inform the faithful. The Bible is one of them, if not the main source. The Old Testament consists of various perspectives on how to live. Some of these perspectives seem to present opposing viewpoints on the same if not similar issues. In the Old Testament, the Book of Proverbs, especially Proverbs 1–9, refers to the world, its creation and living a full life on earth. Another biblical book, also dealing with the world and one’s place in it, is the apocalyptic book of Daniel. In Daniel the world is seen as being in crisis. The readers are presented with an apocalyptic view to help to survive these threatening circumstances. In the same Old Testament therefore, two seemingly opposing views are presented. This chapter studies these two apparently conflicting viewpoints and proposes that when they are read in conjunction with each other, they can inform Ecodomy studies. Ecodomy studies can be advanced by a multiple approach, availing itself with two or more perspectives, even opposing ones, used in dialogue with each other.

In what follows the Chapters 1–9 of the Book of Proverbs is discussed first outlining a specific view of the world and the role of human beings in the larger totality of God’s creation. Next, the seemingly opposing view found in the Book of Daniel to rather wait upon future events, is examined. Finally, it is proposed to read these two stances in juxtaposition with each other – a phenomenon that is found all over the Old Testament.

■ Book of Proverbs and Wisdom

The Books of Proverbs and Daniel are not usually included in theologies of the Old Testament. Neither of them ‘feature any of the major constructs of twentieth-century scholarship’ (Brueggemann 1997:334). Being part of the canon, however, make them theologically relevant and as important as any other book in scriptures. Both of these two books reflect a view on the world as a totality and deal with the believers’ participation in the events of this world.

The Book of Proverbs belongs to the category ‘wisdom literature’. Sapiential writings ‘instil a desire to acquire knowledge and an understanding of the world so that one can make sound judgments and lead a successful and fulfilling life’ (Goff 2010:1339). That is exactly what is found in the Book of Proverbs. The poetic units found in Proverbs 1–9 consist of sayings, all intended to form the reader into a wise person. These poems are ‘more concerned with forming character than with urging specific actions’ (Clifford 2009:659). The mark of a wise person is that he stands in a sound relation to all of creation and to Jahweh its creator. This wisdom-lead, all-inclusive relationship enables the person to live life in its fullness. Sayings, wisdom and life form a *Motivkonstellation* [arrangement of motifs], an inseparable tri-unity of terms (cf. Venter 1981:281–330) in Proverbs 1–9. To take the sayings in these nine chapters to heart, makes you a wise person, someone

who really lives in the fullest sense of the word. Meaningful *life* depends on being *wise* instilling the values taught in the *sayings*.

Basic to all of this is to be in awe of God. The 'fear of the Lord' (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10), to know God, is fundamental to wisdom and real life. It is the 'compass point' (Crenshaw 1998:13) from which life is decided. Religion and ethics form a union and any cognitive endeavour to deal with reality takes God into account.

From this vantage point the world is seen as God's orderly creation. He instilled order into the world. This is 'a network of cooperative, interrelated parts, whereby nourishment and well-being are given' (Brueggemann 1997:337). Furthermore, God bestowed on his creation 'the necessary clues to enable humans to assure their continued existence' (Crenshaw 1998:12) in it. This order is experienced empirically and formulated in the sayings of the sages. By remoulding and transmitting these 'wise sayings and teachings about how to live a righteous, productive, and happy life' (Fox 2008:11) one can become wise.

This 'network of cooperative, interrelated parts' (Brueggemann 1997:337) consists of parts that are different and sometimes even in opposition to each other. Seemingly contradictory sayings are found in Proverbs 26:

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes. (vv. 4–5)

What is sometimes wrong, may be correct on another occasion. It is an all-encompassing order God created in which the most varied entities stand in orderly interrelation with each other.

Wisdom and life are associated with each other. Those who find wisdom find life (Pr 8:35). Murphy and Huwiler (2012:11–12) label wisdom's call 'a divine call to life.' 'Wisdom' and 'life' are 'more closely associated than any other concepts in Proverbs' (Murphy 1998:54). '[T]he goal of wisdom is life' (Murphy 1998:54). Murphy (1966:9) calls 'life' the 'kerygma of the Book of Proverbs'.

As wisdom is 'the reasoned search for a specific way to assure wellbeing and the implementation of those discoveries in daily existence' (Crenshaw 1998:16), the focus falls on everyday life. Wisdom is the conscientious effort to bring everything, even different things, in line with God's order, adding to it an 'ethical dimension' (cf. Brueggemann 1997:337). It includes every aspect of life, be it human relations, family life, sexual ethics, wellness, honour, length of life (cf. Crenshaw 1998:13, 15). It concerns 'modest and prosaic' (Fox 2008:7) issues like dealing with other people, deciding wisely and avoiding dangers.

What is meant by 'life' in Proverbs is therefore much more than mere existence. It is an active way of life that encompasses every aspect of life, be it health, friendship, marriage, posterity, possessions, even sickness, poverty, or whatever (cf. Crenshaw 1998:72).

It is the same as in Egyptian literature where life ‘implies vitality and soundness as well as physical existence’ (Fox 2008:118). The term ‘way’ is very often used to indicate this type of existence that can be called ‘real life’. Actively deciding upon the correct way, guarantees enjoying life in its fullness.

However, life does not indicate eternal life or resurrected life in Proverbs (cf. Fox 2008:136). It simply refers to everyday life in its fullest extent. It does, however, intend a long life, with regard to quantity as well as quality. In Proverbs 3:2 wisdom prolongs its adherents’ life with many years bringing peace and prosperity. It brings a quality to life that is not implicit to the existence of all human beings. In Proverbs 4:10 the father’s teaching is to be understood ‘in a qualitative sense’ (Murphy 1998:21) when it is said to bring about many years of life. For those who ‘fear’ the Lord years will be added to his life through wisdom and his days be many (Pr 9:10–11).

Wisdom is also called ‘a tree of life’ (Pr 3:18) for those who embrace her. This ‘mythological symbol’ (Murphy & Huwiler 2012:24) indicated the fountain of life, that evoked fertility and immortality in the ancient Near East, sometimes meaning ‘eternal life’ (Fox 2008:158). For Israel it rather meant a full life. This picture of a tree is also found in Genesis 2:9; 3:22, 24; Proverbs 11:30; 13:12, and 15:4. In Proverbs it is a ‘figure of speech for a full life’ (Murphy & Huwiler 2012:24), an indication of ‘vitality and healing’ (Fox 2008:159). In Proverbs 3:18 it is a depiction of wisdom that bears the fruit of a full and enriching life (cf. Matthews, Chavalas & Walton 2000: note on 3:18). It functions as ‘metaphor for the happiness that was associated with the good life in sapiential teaching’ (Murphy 1998:22).

Wisdom is also depicted as a ‘personified mythical figure’ (Venter 2016:7 of 8) in Proverbs 1:20–33, 8:1–36 and 9:1–6. Toy (1899:vi) calls wisdom the ‘controller of life’. The ‘substantiated self-recommendation’ (Loader 2014:323) of Wisdom in 8:1–36 sketches her as the source of life and everything that makes life prosperous. In Chapter 8 she acts as ‘agency for generating life-giving order’ (Brueggemann 1997:343). In Proverbs 3:16 wisdom holds long life in her right hand and riches and honour in her left hand. Based on an Egyptian model of the goddess *Ma’at*, wisdom is depicted as source of a life that consists of both wealth and longevity (cf. Loader 2014:171). In Proverbs 8:12–21 she promises sound judgement, insight, dexterity for those who rule, and riches and honour to all who seek to find her. Speaking like a prophet, wisdom invites all and everybody to heed her words, or else receive an ordeal of judgement. The ‘acquisition of wisdom’ (Loader 2014:367) is substantial to real life. When someone stands in a very close relationship with wisdom, she should even be called that person’s sister (Pr 7:4; cf. the erotic vocabulary in Song of Songs, cf. Loader 2014:297). She should be cherished and embraced (Pr 4:8). Like the wife in Proverbs 31:10–31, wisdom will look after those who embrace her. Whoever does this, will receive a full life from her – quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

The conditions for real life are clear. It is a dynamic endeavour. One should adhere to the sayings, venerate God and his creation, seek wisdom with all one's might and walk on the path of righteousness. That will bring about a joyful and prosperous life. Wisdom's call (Pr 1:20–21; 8:1–3), however, is not to be ignored. Life is to make decisions and live a disciplined existence. It is a 'narrow path through rough and perilous territory full of pitfalls, snares, rocks, and storms' (Fox 2008:164). The pursuance of wisdom is a 'drama charged with conflict' (Clifford 2009:659). In Proverbs 1–9 the threat to full life comes from the loose women and deceptive men. Wisdom and life stand in stark contrast to foolishness and undisciplined living. There are two ways: the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous. All the different generic terms used for life in Proverbs, stand in opposition to the generic terms used for folly here.

The assumption in all of these sayings is that 'the world has the capacity to reward good deeds and punish wicked deeds' (Clifford 2009:657). It supposes a connection between an act and its consequences. The wise knows this connection and is therefore able to live in harmony with the world. The wise is able 'to cope with reality in any circumstance of daily experience' (Boccaccini 2002:104).

■ Parallel streams or 'Judaisms'

There were different viewpoints or 'streams' of thinking in the history of Israel. The Pentateuch reflects a juridical approach based on God's laws. The prophetic literature presents the view that God revealed his will to the prophets of the Bible.

The viewpoint in books like Proverbs represents what Boccaccini (2002:103–111) calls 'Sapiential Judaism'. It was an 'autonomous movement' (Boccaccini 2002:103) already in existence in the monarchic era (10th century BCE). This movement maintained its autonomy right through exilic times and started to flourish during the Second Temple period (516 BCE – 70 CE). This stream had a history of its own representing both preservation, continuation and adaptation. The over-optimistic view in Proverbs 1–9 (written somewhere between 6th and 4th century BCE) was challenged during the time of the Second Temple (cf. Adams 2010:1103).

The exile brought totally different circumstances presenting new questions and different answers. The rise of Hellenism since the 4th century BCE and its philosophical design of time, pushed the directness between deed and consequence into a life after death (cf. Crenshaw 1998:29). Developing a linear view of time, reward and retribution was now projected upon a future time after death. That left the present in an uncertain turmoil.

The Books of Job and Ecclesiastes represent sapiential adaptation to new conditions under changed circumstances during the 3rd century BCE. Traditional wisdom was

challenged as insufficient to meet the demands of changed conditions. The wisdom stream also influenced the new upcoming stream of apocalyptic ideas. The ‘midrashic aspect’ (Goldingay 1998:322) of the Book of Daniel clearly indicates that a ‘variety of streams of tradition’ (Goldingay 1998:322) stand behind the book. A form of wisdom is reflected in Daniel that can be called ‘mantic wisdom’. Daniel’s wisdom ‘is primarily revealed, apocalyptic wisdom, but it also embraces a certain amount of empirical learning’ (Collins 1993:403). This can be seen in ‘the catalogues of natural and cosmic phenomena’ (Rowland 2010:346) referred to in the apocalyptic Daniel. The developing differences in worldview between Proverbs and Daniel is to be studied against this social background.

■ Book of Daniel and Apocalypticism

The apocalyptic worldview:

[I]nclude[s] the proclamation of eschatological judgment, a conviction that the present world order is sinful or corrupt, the allocation of rewards and punishment after death, and a concern with the angelic world. (Goff 2010:1341)

This proclamation is presented in the Book of Daniel as a narrative depicting God’s plans for the world. Where the sayings of Proverbs are applied to the present world only, this new worldview operates with ‘a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world’ (Collins 1996:7). The revelations in Daniel are ‘intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority’ (Hellholm 1986:27).

The development of apocalyptic literature in Israel is to be understood against the background of the history in Judea since the return from exile (c. 538 BCE). Different groups started to vie for authority in Judea. There were different views on the restoration of Israel. One visionary-inclined group continued prophetic eschatology anticipating restoration in ‘terms of plain history, real politics, and human instrumentality’ (Hanson 1979:12). Another group represents what Hanson (1979:12) calls ‘apocalyptic eschatology’. They did not think *diesseitig* [on this side] about salvation in everyday terms. Due to ‘a pessimistic view of reality growing out of the bleak post-exilic conditions within which those associated with the visionaries found themselves’ (Hanson 1979:12), they had a different view of God’s sovereignty. A movement from prophetic literature to apocalyptic literature took place among them (cf. Venter 2012). This development steered away from what Boccaccini (2002:34–72) calls ‘Zadokite Judaism’ and ‘Enochic Judaism’ (Boccaccini 2002:89–103).

When the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV, commanded the daily sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem to be discontinued, the altar to be used for sacrifices to deities, and a new

calendar to be introduced in 167 BCE (cf. 1 Macc 1:21–24, 30–50), it led to vigorous reaction and ‘competitive interpretations’ (Boccaccini 2002:163) of the crisis. Among the apocalyptically inclined parties, the group responsible for the Book of Enoch joined the Maccabees in taking an activist stance. The group from which the Book of Daniel originated, ‘chose for a modified apocalyptic form of asceticism’ (Venter 1997:68). The Book of Daniel does not reflect a reaction to the events during the time of Antiochus as such, but presents ‘a way of perceiving those events that is quite different from what we find in the books of Maccabees’ (Collins 1993:61). There was a dispute ‘*um die richtige Einschätzung der leidvollen Gegenwart und die richtige Handlungsalternative für die Zukunft*’ [for the correct assessment of the sorrowful present and the correct alternative action for the future] (Albertz 1992:672).

The inventive and emblematic language used in the Book of Daniel intends to open up the eyes to the supernatural dimension of reality (cf. Collins 1993:61). God is in control. The course of events is beyond human control. The Daniel group therefore preferred to avoid confrontation and retracted, waiting for God to intervene (cf. Venter 1997:89). Although the Divine Warrior motive is found all through the Book of Daniel, the readers are never encouraged to use any violence against the Seleucids themselves. They should rather fall back on the motif of *menschliche Ohnmacht* [human powerlessness] (cf. Venter 2001:326). Daniel shows ‘a movement from violent God (theology) and violent people (ethics) to violent God (cosmology) and non-violent people (anthropology)’ (Venter 2001:326). Over and against Enoch’s viewpoint where the elect ‘act as instruments of social change’ (Boccaccini 2002:197), all change is exclusively the work of God in Daniel. The dynamic approach in Proverbs 1–9 is changed into an impassive approach. Perseverance is seen as ‘the principal virtue’ in Daniel, ‘decisive for salvation’ (Boccaccini 2002:198). In the light of the revealed power of God ‘the acceptance of martyrdom makes sense’ (Collins 1993:61). ‘Daniel 10–12, then, provides a rationale for martyrdom’ (Collins 1993:403). Those persecuted have the ‘freedom to stand fast in confidence’ (Collins 1993:61).

The Book of Daniel comprises of two sections: court tales in Daniel 1–6 and apocalyptic revelations in Daniel 7–12. The court tales in 1–6 ‘share with Esther the concern about maintaining Jewish identity in a foreign land, in the service of a foreign king’ (Collins 2004:554). Stories from an older tradition were merged here ‘to provide a model by which the apparently contrary themes of faithfulness to Jewish law and success in a Gentile milieu were brought in harmony’ (DiTomasso 2010:516). These narratives, however, are not ‘exercises in history writing’ (Collins 2004:554) merely depicting actual events. Incidents from the exile are used to picture Daniel and his friends as faithful Judeans loyal to the pagan rulers and simultaneously faithful to God and their religious traditions. All of these narratives in Daniel 1–6 ‘show the sovereign power of the Most High God’ (Collins 2004:561). They are intended to encourage the faithful to

trust God under very difficult circumstances. In these stories wisdom, prophecy and law are fused into something new. Daniel and his friends keep the laws, like dietary rules (cf. Dn 1), prescribed in the Pentateuch. Daniel is also depicted as receiving messages from God, although in a totally different way than the prophets. He exercises mantic wisdom, receiving and reading dreams like Joseph (Gn 37–50).

Daniel 7–12 reports four supernatural visions Daniel had. They 'are a response to the national-religious crisis precipitated by the policies of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV (167–164 BCE)' (DiTomasso 2010:514). These visions are presented as apocalypses. According to Collins (2004:563), apocalypses fall into two categories: Those of a wonderful journey with its cosmology and the abode of the dead, and a second category with its emphasis 'on history, which is typically divided into a specific number of periods' (four kingdoms, seventy weeks of years). In apocalypses of this type, the focus is on the time of the end, when God will intervene for judgement (cf. Collins 2004:563–544). While Chapters 1–6 of Daniel deal with the *diaspora*, reflecting an acceptance of gentile rule, the 'visions, in contrast, are focused on events in Jerusalem, and reflect a time of persecution' (Collins 2004:564). These visions are found in Daniel Chapters 7–12.

This coincides with two major approaches to Apocalypticism in research. One group deducts from the contents of apocalyptic literature an 'eschatological belief system characterised by dualism and expectation of a new better world breaking into this world from beyond and swamping this age with its glory' (Rowland 2010:346). Another group of scholars working from the 'fact and form of revelation' (Rowland 2010:346) claims that revealed knowledge is the focus in apocalyptic literature. Eschatology does not stand central in apocalypses, but merely stands parallel to other ideas, such as cosmology (cf. Rowland 2010:346). According to Rowland (2010:346) both of these viewpoints are important. The visionary component is indeed central in the apocalypse being eschatological in orientation. This, however, does not *ipso facto* mean that:

[H]ere was a radical, and widespread, shift from *this-worldly* to *otherworldly* in the eschatology of the apocalypses. The apocalypses largely reflect the biblical hope for fulfilment in this world. (Rowland 2010:346)

'Most apocalypses, though, do expect a new age or world order of some sort, but envision it being fulfilled precisely in this world' (Rowland 2010:346).

Daniel's mantic ability to interpret dreams and visions leads to 'a new theology of history wherein any resolution of the present state of affairs could not be imagined to occur within the pales of history' (DiTomasso 2010:515). Moving away from the older Deuteronomistic theology of history where everything depends on upholding the covenant between God and Israel, the catastrophic events of the present (3rd century BCE) is interpreted in the context of a divine master plan for the world. Presenting a 'transcendent reality' (DiTomasso 2010:515) this plan is revealed by an angelic being to

Daniel through visions. These revelations confirm that God is in control and will remove the tribulations in good time. They serve as some form of emergency aid for believers in distress encouraging them to continue their life (Dn 12:13). This brings about a type of in-this-world, but-not-from-this-world attitude.

Two more issues are to receive further attention with regard to Ecodomy: time and the effect of the Book of Daniel upon its readers. In both sections of Daniel, the well-known pattern is used consisting of 'the idea that a sequence of four kingdoms would be followed by a lasting one' (Collins 2004:557). This 'predetermined duration of history' (Boccaccini 2002:198), is intended 'to give to history a meaningful sense for which people could live and die' (Boccaccini 2002:201).

In the exegetical history of the Book of Daniel the aspect of time has been greatly the victim of westernised historical thinking. Revelations in apocalyptic literature have both a temporal as well as a *spatial* axis. This spatial coordinate has been grossly neglected in present exegeses in favour of a Hegelian linear view of history. Aspects of Apocalypticism like the 'expectation of the imminent end of the age, a radical contrast between present and future, the hope for another world breaking into and overtaking this world' (Rowland 2010:345) has been causing interpretation from a western viewpoint on time and history. Dispensational schemes calculating the end of time according to a specific view on the contents of Daniel and Revelations, have led to disastrous events among eschatological groups. James Ussher's six-thousand-year scheme (1650), Darby's millennial dispensationalist design in the early 1830s, the Scofield Reference Bible (1909), Jim Jones' Temple community at Jonestown (18 November 1978), David Koresh and his Branch Davidians (19 April 1993), Applewhite's Heaven's Gate people (23–26 March 1997) and Joseph Kibwetere's Restoration of the Ten Commandments group (17 March 2000) are the main examples of misguided readings of apocalyptic literature.

The concept of time in Daniel should be read against the background of its 'social and historical matrix' (Hanson 1985:466). Due to the lack of sufficient evidence for this matrix, however, scholars are inclined to treat time in Daniel according to 'their own conceptualization of time' (Venter 2000:673). The reference to 'time, times and half a time' in Daniel 7:25, 'seventy sevens' in Daniel 9:24–27, and 'the time of the end' in Daniel 11:40–12:13, is either read from a developmental westernised concept of time and history or from a 'more world and present orientated' (Venter 2000:680) view on time and its meaning. Time in Daniel should be read according to Daniel's contemporary view of Sabbaths and jubilees and its understanding of time in the context of shame and contempt (Dn 12:2). It should also be interpreted in conjunction with the spatial axis of its Apocalypticism.

The spatial axis in the Book of Daniel is closely linked to the interpretation of its temporal axis. The dualistic view in the book not only intends another time as well, but

also another place, different from the present earth. Although Chapter 7 of Daniel depicts a heavenly being sitting upon his throne, the vision ‘takes place on earth and is implemented here’ (Goldingay 1998:331). The restoration to life sketched in Chapter 12 ‘is a restoration to earthly life of whole people, not of disembodied spirits in heaven’ (Goldingay 1998:331). The different kingdoms paraded in the book are all earthly kingdoms. Even the kingdom of God is part of the reality of this world. Simultaneously this world is part of a much greater universe over which God rules.

Which space is intended, present earthly space, or otherworld future space, depends on how the indications of time in Daniel 12 are interpreted. According to Collins (1993:400) the ‘end’ in Daniel 12:13 ‘is never the utter cessation of history.’ The question, however, is whether there is a longer history, where (place) will it happen? The numbers in Daniel 8:14 (2300 evenings and mornings), Daniel 12:11 (1290 days, 1335 days) differ. The first ‘is specified as the time until the sanctuary is right’ (Collins 1993:400). Collins’ (1993:401) explanation for the second longer time in Daniel 12:11 is that the earlier expected end after 1290 days ‘is drawn out, and the faithful must “wait” for the later date.’ This ‘end’, however, is not the anticipated cleansing of the temple (Goldingay 1998:310). The time between the desecration of the temple and its re-consecration was three years (1 Macc. 1:54; 4:52–54). Something ‘more than the restoration of sacrifice’ (Goldingay 1998:310) is designated here. It was rather ‘some more definitive event, most probably the resurrection that was described at the beginning of the chapter’ (Collins 1993:401). No information is given on what will happen at the end of that time (cf. Goldingay 1998:310), nor where it is going to take place. This is ‘obscure to us’ (Goldingay 1998:310). The numbers could have been symbolic or based on different calendars (cf. Nelson 2013:315–317). This ‘end’ is to be read in conjunction with Daniel’s 12:1–3 expectation of God’s kingdom and the resurrection (cf. Goldingay 1998:310). This issue is taken up again below.

It can be supposed that the ‘end’ in Daniel 12:13 is the same as ‘the time of the end’ in Daniel 12:4 (cf. Goldingay 1998:310). Read along with the ‘awake’ in Daniel 12:2 and interpreted within its context, there are different literal possibilities. It could indicate the time that came to an end ‘with Judas’s victories, the temple rededication, Antiochus’s death, the arrival of news of his death, or the further events envisaged by 11:45–12:3’ (Goldingay 1998:310). It is part of an apocalyptic vision, a ‘flight of the imagination’ (Goldingay 1998:306). It is not the articulated belief of resurrection in some future time as formulated by Jews and Christians later on. It refers to the hard reality of persecution and death and the possibility that those who are faithful may die. The visions in Daniel inform God’s people ‘on the significance of history, past, present, and future’ (Goldingay 1998:332). The wise (Dn 12:3) teach the faithful ‘the apocalyptic interpretation of events’ (Collins 1993:403). What happens in history is to be understood in terms of God’s control over the world and its history. God is in full control of everyone and everything.

The four eras show that history has an ‘imposed destiny’ (Goldingay 1998:315). The visions indicate ‘how God’s rule becomes reality’ (Goldingay 1998:331). His kingdom breaks into *this world* and makes it possible for those who stand under oppressive political power to still have a full life.

This implies a life that even ‘transcends death’ (Collins 1993:402). Life entails something beyond the normal boundaries. The visions do not offer any prospect of a supernatural deliverance here on earth. Life still goes on without any real change. Daniel is encouraged to still go his way till the end (Dn 12:13). The hope for salvation is, however, transferred to a point beyond death (cf. Collins 1993:403). Death will not jeopardise the final outcome of God’s rule. God in his power will bring about resurrection. But God’s history does not stop there. The visions envision ‘a world that is clearly one with our world, even though it points to signals of transcendence that suggest something beyond our world’ (Goldingay 1998:333). Earthly kingdoms may come to an end, like the oppressive reign Daniel experienced in his time, but that will not be the end of God’s reign on earth. The visions present in their own peculiar way:

[A] radically different world that makes continuing life in this world possible on the basis of its not being the only world, or in the End the most important one. (p. 334)

These imageries ‘opened up an alternative world that people were prepared to believe would endure as the old order would not’ (Goldingay 1998:334). They give the weak and powerless the possibility to live a full life in the here and now.

This belief in God’s transcendent power endows the wise referred to in Daniel 11:33–35 and Daniel 12:3 to ‘shine like the brightness of heaven’ (Dn 12:3) and the stars. They teach and show others how to live a meaningful life even under the most afflicted circumstances. To be faithful to God demands continuing your life within his overarching rule of the world. Goldingay (1998:332) remarks that the ‘visions are not specific about lines of action they expect of the faithful (military action? passive resistance? continuing obedience to the Torah? withdrawal from temple worship?).’ We indicated above in our discussion of the Book of Daniel that the people responsible for the book chose a type of asceticism (cf. Venter 1997:68).

■ Conclusion

The wisdom approach in Proverbs 1–9 sees the world as an ordered entity that can be enjoyed with full intensity when it is seen as the world God created, and when it is lived with wisdom. The apocalyptic literature in Daniel sees the world as a world in shambles that can still be enjoyed if it is experienced in terms of God’s overarching reign that overreaches even present oppression. How can both of these be implemented in a meaningful life? My view is that they are to be used in conjunction with each other.

This can be illustrated in Daniel 9 where the *Gattung* [genre] of a Penitential Prayer (Dn 9:4–19) is used with its Deuteronomistic theology of history interlinked with an apocalyptic narrative (Dn 9:1–3, 9:20–27), with its deterministic theology of history (cf. Venter 2007:40–41). The prayer and narrative are put in ‘juxtaposition to express a central truth’ (Venter 2007:43). In the typical Semitic way of thinking, two different theologies are put here in a mirror-like relationship to form a newer position. The Deuteronomistic contents of the prayer are enriched by the apocalyptic view of the narrative and vice versa.

Another example are the two dates in Daniel 12:11. They can probably reflect different stages in the growth of the book. When the end did not come after 1290 days, more days were added: 1335 days. Goldingay (1998:310) read it as referring to ‘God’s kingdom and the resurrection.’ Nelson (2013:315–317) sees these numbers as ‘symbolic or based on different calendars.’ What is important, however, is that both dates are kept in the final book, even when the last number of days did not bring the end. Why keep two dates as no one of them seems to be a literal and correct forecast of the time between the desecration of the temple and the end? Josephus disconnected these predictions ‘from their historical moorings’ (Collins 1993:401) and connected them to the destruction of Rome in 70 CE. In my mind we are dealing with typical Semitic antithetical poetry here. I think that exegesis of this information is to be freed from *all* exact historical calculation. These two numbers are to be read in conjunction with each other. They intend something more than just calendrical dates. The theoretical physicist, Stephen Hawking, uses his theory of ‘Model-dependent realism’ (Ferguson 2011:424) to explain dualities in the cosmos. Dualities are those ‘situations in which two different, perhaps mutually exclusive, descriptions are necessary to gain a better understanding than either description alone can provide’ (Ferguson 2011:424). Together these dates probably refer to the time until the end that cannot be calculated exactly according to human calendars. All time is in God’s hand. Salvation does not come from any specific date or master plan, but from God himself and his decision.

The dialogical process, indicated in the history of the Book of Daniel above, was also present in the forming of the eventual Hebrew Bible itself. Parallel streams of tradition, or what Boccaccini (2002) would call ‘Judaisms’, moved alongside each other, often influencing each other. A ‘rapprochement and even fusion between priestly, apocalyptic and sapiential traditions’ (Venter 2002:485) took place. Daniel is depicted as a sage practicing mantic wisdom. The older wisdom literature found in Proverbs stood in dialogue with the critical wisdom in Job and Qohelet, which in turn were juxtaposed to the crucial stance of the world found in the apocalyptic book of Daniel. What is of importance, however, is that the older phases of the canonical process are *not* replaced by younger developments in the forming of the eventual canon. Not only literature representing a specific stage in canon growth are found in the canon, but also much older literature standing in juxtaposition with much younger literature.

Reflecting on the use of the Old Testament for our study of Ecodomy, the wisdom literature of Proverbs 1–9 should be read in juxtaposition with the apocalyptic literature in Daniel. They are two sides of the same coin. The Book of Proverbs invites the reader to enjoy a full life by believing in God the creator of the earth and use wisdom as a guide to interact with an orderly creation not only benefitting from all that the earth can present, but also to contribute to the prosperity of its reality. Daniel lives in a chaotic world, but is able to survive by knowing God is in command. God reigns not only over the present world, but even over a cosmos which also includes other spaces and other times. Hamlet, after all, told Horatio: ‘There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy’ (Shakespeare Quick Quotes, Hamlet 1.5.167–168). Although someone keeps a passive stance he can actively resist what is going wrong on earth, slowing it down. Both Proverbs and Daniel are dealing with a way of life, not so dissimilar as one would think. Both propagate belief in God, taking part in the world either by wisdom or by apocalyptic belief that God will always be in control. This dialogical view should be developed further by putting the ‘apocalyptic, prophetic and priestly viewpoints’ (Venter 2002:486) and sapiential views in the Old Testament in dialogue with each other and eventually in dialogue with the different viewpoints found in the New Testament. Ecodomy can learn from the Bible to use a lateral dialogical model of thinking that accommodates more than one view on earth and its inhabitants.

■ Summary: Chapter 7

Ecodomy studies need heuristic models to inform Christians how to cope with their world. The Bible presents different appropriate models. These models are to be read in conjunction with each other. The models presented by the sapiential literature in Proverbs and the apocalyptic literature in Daniel are studied in this chapter. The Books of Proverbs and Daniel seem to present opposite viewpoints on what life should be. Proverbs propagates a life of faith, wisdom and participation in the orderly world God created. Daniel’s advice is to wait upon God in this chaotic world. It is proposed that these seemingly opposing viewpoints are to be read in dialogue with each other. Their juxtaposition presents a lifestyle that is optimistic as well as realistic, trusting God’s superior reign.²¹

21. The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this chapter.

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■ Chapter 7

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