

Deuterocanonical and
Cognate Literature
Yearbook 2005



Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature

Edited by

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Walter de Gruyter • Berlin • New York

Yearbook 2005

The Book of Wisdom in Modern Research

Studies on Tradition, Redaction, Theology

Edited by

Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia

With an introduction by

John J. Collins

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Editorial

The developments in biblical research over recent years show that many extremely interesting results of focused studies at thematic specialist congresses are being presented. One partly has the impression that the main thrust of scholarly works concentrates on this form, such that the results which used to be available (after a long time) in book form, are now, even when they are not in thematically well developed forms, easily available for discussion. Due to the additional fact that today specialisation even in special areas leads to a concentration of expertise, a lot of views appear very early on current themes; a trend which then could not be observed even with the presence of a large number of reviews. As a result of these facts such specialist congresses turn out to be a valuable contribution to the development of special areas.

Based on this experience, like the congresses on Ben Sira 1995 (BZAW 244), 1996 (BZAW 255), 2001 (BZAW 321), there was a clear wish from the group which occupies itself with the deuterocanonical literature to have a solid forum offered for discussion. The subsequent deliberations led to the foundation of the "International Society for the Study of Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature (ISDCL)". In the process of consideration of the foundation of this significant society the wish to consider the whole of deuterocanonical literature and its various branches was incorporated. This led to the planning of the conference "The Function and Relevance of Prayer in Deuterocanonical Literature" in the year 2003 in Salzburg. The above mentioned society was officially founded on the occasion of this conference. The publisher – de Gruyter – offered itself in this context as a generous promoter.

The interest of our group aims at leading the different initiatives with regards to the research in the area of deuterocanonical literature to one another. In consultation with the publisher de Gruyter, there will be a possibility to offer a forum for pertinent publications.

Furthermore in recent months the yearbook "Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature" could be initiated through the generous sponsorship of Dr. Claus-Jürgen Thornton from the de Gruyter publishing company. Through this new series opportunity will be offered to publish the proceedings of the conferences within the scope of the International Society for the Study of Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature, which will be on a regular two-year cycle. Each of these conferences will be centering on more comprehensive themes in the area of deuterocanonical and related literature, e.g. this year's international conference of the ISDCL in Barcelona on the theme "How Israel's Later Authors Viewed its Earlier History". The proceedings are in preparation for publication in the next year's volume.

It is planned that further conference proceedings be published within the years between the big conferences. To be included are relevant meetings like this year's volume on the Book of Wisdom. The latest considerations have brought us to the idea of our society organising symposia in future. The contributions which will be made and discussed will then be published each time as single volumes of the yearbook in those years in which no volume from a congress is to be published. This makes it possible for the yearbook to be published annually.

As editor I wish to express my gratitude to those who have been supporting our initiatives either through purchase or subscription. We shall continue in our endeavour to offer and maintain the yearbook at a suitable level.

Friedrich Vinzenz Reiterer, Salzburg

Introduction

JOHN J. COLLINS

This volume had its origin in a conference held in Palermo, on March 22-23, 2002, hosted by the Theological Faculty of Sicily. The conference was an exercise in dialogue, between scholars from different national and cultural backgrounds on the one hand, and between socio-historical, literary and theological modes of interpretation on the other. The focus of the discussion, the Wisdom of Solomon, lends itself readily to such multifaceted dialogue. Written in Alexandria around the turn of the era, it is at once heir to the legacy of biblical Israel and a product of Hellenistic education. It reflects, if only indirectly, the bitter struggles in which Jews were engaged in Alexandria in the early Roman era, but it is also the most philosophical book in the Greek Bible. For the latter reason, it was accommodated readily to the philosophical theology that flourished in early Christianity, and it is an important witness to the theological context in which early Christianity developed.

All of these facets of the Wisdom of Solomon are addressed in the present volume. David Winston sets the stage with a masterful overview of scholarship on the book over the last century. Winston reviews the discussion of the literary structure and the attempts to locate Wisdom in relation to Scripture, to post-biblical apocalyptic literature and to philosophy. He is perhaps too modest in his brief references to his own commentary in the Anchor Bible series, undoubtedly the most important treatment of Wisdom in the last half century. A second fundamental study is provided by Maurice Gilbert, a Belgian scholar who has done much to shape Italian Catholic scholarship, especially in the area of wisdom, by his teaching at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. Gilbert judiciously notes how the different sections of the book are stitched together by overlapping references. Consequently, different commentators have divided the book in different ways, each pointing to actual features in the text. Gilbert resists the impulse to divide by taking closer account of the rhetoric of the book.

These introductory essays are followed by three essays that focus on the social and historical context in Alexandria when the book was written. Marie-Françoise Baslez discusses the contemporary pagan cults against which the polemic of Wisdom is directed. She argues that this polemic reflects the early years of Roman rule, around 20 BCE, rather than the time of Caligula and Philo in the first century CE. Luca Mazzinghi uses a careful analysis of Wis 19:13-17 to open a window on the dispute about Jew-

ish rights in Alexandria after the imposition of the *laographia* tax, early in the reign of Augustus. Giuseppe Bellia, in his “historical-anthropological reading,” discusses the difficulty of doing a sociological study of a literary text. He attempts to address the social context of the book not by adducing external data but by a close reading of its rhetoric. He too assigns the book to the Augustan age.

The discussions of social context are followed by three essays that attempt to bring Wisdom into dialogue with different corpora of Jewish literature. Émile Puech considers Wisdom in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and argues that the Hellenistic book is thoroughly in line with biblical tradition. Specifically, he insists that both the Scrolls and Wisdom expect a bodily resurrection of the just. My own essay, on the reinterpretation of apocalyptic traditions in Wisdom, in contrast, argues that these traditions are reinterpreted through a lens of Hellenistic philosophy, and that the hope for the future life does not entail resurrection, but rather immortality of the soul. Silvana Manfredi looks for allusions to the older Jewish scriptures in Wis 5:1-14, and finds significant echoes of the confessions of Jeremiah and of the third Servant Song of Isaiah (Isa 50:4-9).

Three further essays examine specific passages in the Book of Wisdom. Angelo Passaro provides an exegesis of the passage dealing with the serpent and the manna in Wisdom 16, to highlight its theological message, which draws an absolute contrast between human power and human impotence and suggests that the community can still encounter the presence of God in divine Word. Rosario Pistone discusses the explanation of the Exodus miracle by analogy with the music of lyres in light of musical theories of the time. Roberto Vignolo discusses the prayer of Solomon and the model of kingship implied, and contrasts it with the use of the kingship motif in Qoheleth. For Qoheleth, the claim of royalty is a mask to be deconstructed. For Wisdom, kingship is the destiny of all humanity. The contrast between the two books hinges on their different attitudes towards death.

Two essays look beyond the Book of Wisdom to its reception history. Giovanni Rizzi identifies some interpretative elements in the Peshitta translation of Wisdom. Paolo Iovino raises the question of a relationship between Wisdom and Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, in dialogue with J.-N. Aletti, James Dunn and other scholars. He focuses on the association of three key terms: wisdom, mystery and revelation.

The concluding essay by Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia draws together the main themes of the volume.

A volume of essays is not a systematic commentary. Inevitably, there are many aspects of the Wisdom of Solomon that are not treated here. Nonetheless, the volume provides a good introduction to several basic

issues in the discussion of this fascinating book: its literary structure, its social setting and its relationship to other strands of Jewish tradition. It also raises questions about the import of the book for Christian theology, both in the exegesis of particular passages and in relation to the writings of Paul. The theological focus of several of the essays gives the book a distinctive quality in the context of contemporary scholarship. Not least among its achievements is the fact that it brings distinctively Italian voices into dialogue with French and English language scholarship, where they have received too little attention in the past.

Preface

The Book of Wisdom has been taken to be a riposte to the terrible but unavoidable questions raised by Job and Qoheleth and, more generally, to the unanswered questions which the earlier sapiential tradition had to confront before undisputed success of the Greco-Roman culture. One can agree with this claim or not, but, in any case, one must take note of the fact that the book's answers emerge from the context of the Jewish Diaspora and not from Jerusalem or Palestine, and that the latter, in their turn, did not accept them into their own constitutive heritage. This is little enough information, but it indicates the point of departure and the direction which a critical enquiry must inevitably undertake if it wishes to grasp the peculiar nature of a work where historico-cultural context and theological purpose appear more than ever interwoven and inseparable.

There is no doubt that in the last twenty years our book has been the object of rigorous and specialist studies which have emphasised important aspects and themes. There have not been lacking attempts at hermeneutic reworking of themes and problems of great interest, but, up to now, no complete view of the book has been attained with the consequent risk of multiplying specialist and partial interpretations. In fact, the text appears exuberant in its literary form and inviting in its symbolic content and, therefore, loaded with literary allusions, with interpretative ambiguity for those possibilities of meaning which seem close to revealing themselves while remaining elusive. The corpus of unresolved problems, from the definition of literary genre to its relationship with the previous Biblical tradition, from the sense of its roots in the Judaeo-Hellenistic environment to the debated question of the link with the apocalyptic tradition, from the exact characterisation of the addressees to the precise purpose pursued by the author: all these signal the complexity of a book which is clear and yet elusive. It is still not certain if it is an erudite pamphlet composed for the internal use of the Alexandrian Jewish community or a polemical and pretentious book which, with delicate irony and apologetic intent, addresses itself to a wider public, and it is precisely from this uncertainty that there proceeds that fragmentation of the latest research which a flexible and coherent methodology must seek to lead to a more homogeneous hermeneutic.

To tackle some of the questions emerging from this sapiential work, the third Conference of Biblical Studies organised by the Theological Faculty of Sicily, "St. John the Evangelist," held from the 22-23 March 2002, sought to read the Book of Wisdom within a unitary optic in which it is grasped in the act of its redactional process, in the context of its concrete religious and cultural environment and, finally, in the theological tension of its contro-

versial canonical position. This enterprise is in continuity with the Conference on the Book of Proverbs of April 1998 and that on the Book of Qoheleth of April 2000 and is part of a series of meetings of study and research which, falling biennially, deal with the sapiential corpus seen as literature and as a rethinking of the whole of the previous Biblical texts. The warm reception given to the volumes on Proverbs and Qoheleth (*Libro dei Proverbi. Tradizione, redazione, teologia*, Casale Monferrato [AL] 1999; *Libro del Qohelet. Tradizione, redazione, teologia*, Milan 2001), has encouraged us to put into print also the proceedings of this last meeting, following the open and multidisciplinary approach of the preceding publications which, in a fruitful interaction of contribution, debate and recapitulation of the text on the part of all the participants, pursued a reading at every level of the texts produced by the wise scribes of Israel.

Because of ancient and persistent prejudices, which are really more ideological than substantive, the sapiential scripture was until a few years ago the object of unsatisfactory hermeneutics, at times even sterile and wasted, oscillating between the overdone search for ancestry from – it would be better to say dependence on – the pragmatic vision of the wisdom of the ancient Orient, and the improbable recovery of the ancient, pre-exilic scribal traditions of Israel or of presumed phantom didactic circles of pre-exilic Judaism. In fact, our writing is situated in that nodal point of the historico-religious drama of Israel where the luminous memory of a past loaded with the divine presence meets the shadowy prospect of an elusive and mysterious fulfilment of the promised salvation which the persevering faith of the believers delivers from the disappointment of a present that is rather poor and uncertain. Just like, perhaps more than, other sapiential texts, the work of the Pseudo-Solomon, on account of its peculiar literary and theological connotation, is also situated, as a cardinal text, as hermeneutic locus of that unitary process of understanding and re-signification of the event of revelation which every generation, standing between memory and expectation, must carry out in order to place itself within the living history of the people of Abraham.

At the same time as it accepts the reading of a rigorous historical-critical exegesis in its double force, diachronic and synchronic, a research orientated towards a holistic reading welcomes a considered theological hermeneutic in its literary and canonical complexity. Moreover, in order to open new perspectives of study on the Book of Wisdom we must also reckon with the contribution of the human sciences which, while they make the spatial-temporal coordinates of the work emerge with a sociological and anthropological questioning of the text, allow us a sufficiently clear knowledge of the cultural universe of the writer. The free exchange between specialists of various fields and of different approaches has provided the oppor-

tunity to get to know critically different interpretative scenarios, offering the possibility of reconsidering the real intention pursued by the author for a work the origin of which, but not the exact time of its composition, is attested.

An absolute gain reached in the previous meetings has been that of having been able to determine with stringent argument that the distinction between 'popular' wisdom and learned wisdom, between experiential knowledge and theological knowledge, is not supported by the texts. Wisdom is inexorably a unity and even the latest of the sapiential books continues this unitary theological tradition. It brings to completion a complex and, in the end, linear journey of reflection which for some centuries engaged the believing meditation of Israel ready for a discreet and perhaps also reluctant handing over of a hope of the faith very near to the dawn of the primitive Christian communities.

In fact, already for more than a decade, the beginnings of an important reversal of attitude towards the sapiential books had been registered. This had led the specialists to consider this literature with greater critical methodology and renewed theological attention. Exegesis and hermeneutical theology had, therefore, become the points of reference of a study, at once many-sided and converging which sought to analyse textual structure, literary composition, religious tradition, the historico-cultural environment and, so, the complex make-up of the inspired text. The meetings of the Theological Faculty of Sicily were obliged to welcome these innovative proposals, keeping a constant watch on the traditional methodologies and the new approaches, characterising in this way the views of research in the field of the tradition of the text, its redaction and its theological message.

So then, for the Book of Wisdom there has been sought a really polyphonic approach which is in harmony with different hermeneutics to verify their consistency and their real attitude to complementarity. We have put forward once again, therefore, the methodology tried out with good results in the previous meetings, a methodology which has favoured the encounter but also the impassioned and sincere debate between specialists of different schools and different hermeneutical orientations. Only thus can be studied the structural unity of the work, the thematic progress of the book, its particular historical import and its specific theological importance, not foreseen in vain, and all this with an epistemological foundation that is correct and productive which once again has seen, in the course of its operation, scholars smooth down some roughnesses, adjust the weight of some of their observations and receive the more mature fruits of someone else's competence in order to balance better their hermeneutical positions.

With a few changes, this volume is the translation of the Italian edition published in February 2004 by Città Nuova Editrice di Roma in the series

“*Studia Biblica*” (*Libro della Sapienza. Tradizione, redazione, teologia*). Our warm thanks go to Città Nuova Editrice for having freely granted the rights for the translation. Our thanks go also to Friedrich V. Reiterer and to the other colleagues who direct for W. de Gruyter the Series “Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature” (Pancratius C. Beentjes, Nuria Calduch-Benages, Benjamin Wright). It is they who have suggested the insertion of the English edition of this book in the Series which they direct and co-ordinate.

Our thanks must also go to Dr. Michael Tait and to Dr. Anthony Dewhurst. With their careful and valuable work of translation they have allowed the editing of this volume to proceed. Grateful thanks are also due to Dr. Jeremy Corley who, with his attention to detail, has looked through the manuscript and suggested stylistic improvements. On the IT side of this process, invaluable assistance has been given by Mr. Salvatore Tirrito.

This volume is offered with the wish that this labour may result in some profit for anyone who has searched for, waited for and desired to meet the royal wisdom.

Palermo, September 2005

Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia

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Abbreviations

ABI	Associazione Biblica Italiana
Aeg	Aegyptus
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und der Urchristentum
AJT	American Journal of Theology
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
AncB	Anchor Bible
Anton	Antonianum
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, Berlin
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATA	Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BCH.S	Bulletin de Correspondances Helléniques. Supplément
BEAT	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums
BeO	Bibbia e Oriente
BETHL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	Biblica
BIFAO	Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire
BiKi	Bibel und Kirche
BJSt	Brown Judaic Studies
BT	Bibliothèque de théologie
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CB.OT	Coniectanea biblica. Old Testament series
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CEv	Cahiers Evangile
Conc.	Concilium
CPJ	V. A. Tcherikover – A. Fuks – M. Stern, Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum, I-III, Cambridge MA 1957-1964.
CRAI	Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres
CRB	Cahiers de la Revue Biblique
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSB	Studi Biblici (Bologna)
CTNT	Commentario Teologico del Nuovo Testamento
CuaBi	Cuadernos Biblicos
DB	Dictionnaire de la Bible

DBS	Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
DSD	Dead Sea Discoveries
DThC	Dictionnaire de théologie catholique
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
EeT	Église et théologie
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
EtB	Études bibliques
ETHL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
ETHS	Erfurter Theologische Schriften
ETR	Études théologiques et religieuses
EvTh	Evangelische Theologie
FHG	C. Müller, <i>Fragmenta Historicum Graecorum</i> , I-V, Paris 1848-1883.
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GLNT	G. Kittel (ed.), <i>Grande Lessico del Nuovo Testamento</i> , Brescia 1963-1988.
HR	History of Religions
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HThR	Harvard Theological Review
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
IESS	International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences
IG	Inscriptiones Graecae, Ausgabe der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin
IThQ	Irish Theological Quarterly
JAOS	Journal of American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JEA	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman period
JSOT.SS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series
JSP	Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha
JSP.SS	Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha. Supplement Series
JStS	Judaic Studies (Series)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LeDiv	Lectio Divina
MPIL	Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Leiden
NDIEC	New Documents illustrating early Christianity
NRTh	Nouvelle Revue Théologique
NTOA	Novum testamentum et orbis antiquus
NTS	New Testament Studies
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis

OTL	The Old Testament Library
PSV	Parola Spirito e Vita
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen
RAC	Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum
RB	Revue Biblique
REA	Revue des études anciennes
REG	Revue des études grecques
RivBib	Rivista Biblica
RivBibSuppl.	Supplementi alla Rivista Biblica
RThPh	Revue de Théologie et Philosophie
Sal.	Salesianum
SBL.SPS	Society of Biblical Literature. Seminar paper series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCI	Scripta Classica Israelica
ScrHie	Scripta Hierosolymitana
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
StBi	Studi Biblici (Brescia)
StPB	Studia Post-biblica
StUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVF	H. von Arnim, Stoicorum veterum fragmenta, I-IV, Leipzig 1921-1924.
Teol	Teologia (Milan)
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
UCOP	University of Cambridge oriental publications
UF	Ugarit-Forschungen
VT	Vetus Testamentum
YCS	Yale Classical Studies
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
ZWTh	Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie

A Century of Research on the Book of Wisdom

DAVID WINSTON

1. Introduction

The Wisdom of Solomon (hereafter Wis) remains somewhat of a puzzle in spite of all the detailed research that has been devoted to it. Its philosophical rhetoric, which is often clouded by ambiguity, and the allusive quality of many of its references make it difficult to determine its precise significance. Indeed, its abrupt shifts in style, meter, and subject long resisted all efforts to see it as a unified and fully coherent whole. Many commentators were readily seduced into carving it up into independent units with diverse authorship. J. C. C. Nachtigal went to the extreme of regarding the book as a mosaic, to which no less than 79 sages contributed, although most were content to envisage two, three, or even four different authors.¹ As late as 1936, Edward Menahem Stein thought that the title 'Wisdom of Solomon' was originally attached only to the second part of the book (chaps. 6-10), the 'book of wisdom' proper, and only later, when this was joined to the first part (chaps. 1-5), the 'book of eschatology,' to which yet a third part (chaps. 11-19), a Hellenistic midrash on the Exodus, was added by the editor, was the entire complex finally designated by a single name. The first two parts, according to Stein, were originally written in Hebrew and were composed in the land of Israel, the first part ca. 167 BCE, the second sometime before the Hasmonean age. An editor virtually translated the first part, to a large extent reworked the second part, and then appended to these a midrash of his own making on the Exodus. He probably lived in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy VII Physcon (145-130 BCE), and so was a younger contemporary of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE). Thus, in his youth there occurred the terrible events in Palestine, and in his old age he was an eyewitness to the Jewish persecutions in Egypt occasioned by Ptolemy VII.²

Although a detailed literary analysis has now produced a consensus that the Wisdom of Solomon is a unified whole, the product of a single author, the apocalyptic character of chaps. 2-5, the so-called 'book of eschatology,' still leaves a jarring effect on the reader. John Collins has attempted to define more precisely the relationship between wisdom literature and

1 NACHTIGAL, *Das Buch der Weisheit*.

2 KAHANA, *Ha-Sefarim Ha-Hizonim* 464, 468-70.

apocalyptic, and his analysis has clearly advanced our understanding of the various ways in which these two genres could be joined in a single work. The real issue, however, is how a writer such as the author of the book under discussion could adapt an apocalyptic worldview to his own philosophically sophisticated perception of reality. In order to engage that problem the nature and quality of the philosophical approach of the author of Wis must be fully addressed. My assessment of some of the major trends in twentieth century scholarship on the Book of Wisdom will therefore begin with the analysis of its literary structure and then turn to the peculiar mix of philosophy, mysticism, and apocalyptic that undergirds it.

2. Literary Structure: Unity of Authorship and Genre

Although the early attempts to demonstrate the composite authorship of Wis were seemingly demolished by Carl Grimm in his great commentary of 1860, in which he grounded the unity of the book in the uniformity of language and style characterizing the whole, voices are still heard from time to time that assign various parts of Wis to different hands. One of the strongest defenses of such an approach was already mounted in 1913 by Friedrich Focke, and the apparent cogency of some of his arguments still seemed to me to require a serious response when I wrote my Anchor Bible commentary in 1979.³ Focke divided the book into two parts (1-5; 6-19), and suggested that the Alexandrian Jewish author of the second part may also have been the translator of the Palestinian Hebrew original of the first part.⁴ In an interesting variation of Focke's theory, Lothar Ruppert proposed that Wis 2:12-20; 5:1-7 had its origin in an apocalyptic dyptic on the theme of the suffering just (based on the servant song in Isa 52:13-53:12), composed in Palestine between 100-75 BCE in either Hebrew or Aramaic under the impact of Alexander Jannaeus' persecution of the Pharisees in 86. It was translated in Egypt relatively early into Greek by the author of Wis, and served as a fillip for the composition of his own book.⁵

The fact that there is now a broad consensus regarding the unity of the

3 WINSTON, *The Wisdom of Solomon* 13-14.

4 FOCKE, *Die Entstehung*. The composition of Wis 1-5 he places under Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE), more specifically in the context of the terrible persecution of the Pharisees by him between 88-86.

5 RUPPERT, *Der leidende Gerechte* 70-105; *Id.*, *Gerechte und Frevler* 15-19, where he notes the differences in vocabulary between these passages and the rest of Wis. Collins correctly observes that "it is unlikely that the source document can be simply retrieved from its present context, where it is well integrated, but it is likely that the author had an apocalyptic source here." See COLLINS, *Jewish Wisdom* 184-85.

authorship of Wis and its original language, is due above all to the great advances that have been made in our understanding of its literary structure. Yet the problematic of the book is such that the assigning of a Semitic language origin for the first part of Wis continues to find occasional advocates. In his MA thesis of 1923, the renowned Assyriologist and Bible commentator Ephraim Speiser returned to that hypothesis. Ignorant of Focke's study, he nevertheless arrived at similar conclusions; the translator of the first part is the author of the second part, though for him the first part consisted of 1:1-6:21; 8-9, while the second part consisted of 6:22-7:30; 10-19. His principal argument is drawn from alleged mistranslations of the translator.⁶ Similarly, in 1945, Charles Cutler Torrey, "regarded at the time as the dean of Semitic language scholars in the U.S.," and "famous for promulgating certain controversial opinions," attempted to show that Wis 1-10 is a translation of a Hebrew original.⁷

A more recent attempt to postulate Hebrew or Aramaic source documents for Wis is that of William Horbury, who suggested that Wis is a Greek compilation by a single writer, or by writers from the same school (echoing here the view of Dieter Georgi), who used more than one source: "Sources or versions now lost," he writes, "may have circulated in Hebrew or Aramaic; that a Hebrew text representing at least some part of Wis existed for a time seems likely on the general ground that the book had a high standing among Jews at the time of Christian origins." Horbury thinks that "the first ten chapters reflect circumstances in which the 'Epicureanism' represented in Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus, and many Jewish epitaphs seemed influential—perhaps near the beginning of the first century BC, when Alexander Jannaeus reigned in Judaea and repressed the Pharisees".⁸

As already noted, the turning point that finally swept away earlier attempts to assign composite authorship to Wis and ultimately marginalized all subsequent forays into such endeavors, came with the successful determination of its literary structure. James Reese set the tone for this new departure by his recognition of the importance of the 'inclusion,' the repetition at the end of a section, of a word or phrase used at its beginning, as a means of establishing the limits of the various units of the book. He further noted the author's employment of concentric or parallel symmetry, and the frequent repetition of significant ideas in similar phrasing, which he dubbed 'flashbacks'.⁹ Addison Wright applied these insights systematical-

6 SPEISER, *The Hebrew Origin*.

7 TORREY, *The Apocryphal Literature* 100ff.

8 HORBURY, *The Christian Use* 183, 195-96. Horbury agrees with Seeley that polemical association of such hedonistic views with Epicureans and Sadducees is likely, irrespective of the justice of the claims.

9 REESE, *Plan and Structure* 391-99; *Hellenistic Influence*.

ly and proceeded to provide a detailed literary analysis of the entire text.¹⁰ Building on these solid beginnings, and refining their approach yet further, Maurice Gilbert analyzed in precise detail the literary structure of the lengthy digression on false worship in Wis 13-15 and later extended this analysis to the entire book.¹¹ F. Perrenchio demonstrated the extensive use of concentric and parallel symmetry in the first two chapters of Wis, and Paolo Bizzeti's analysis of the first six chapters shed new light on the author's tendency to link sections together by means of transitional units, thus providing a partial explanation of some of the difficulties scholars have had in delimiting the book's various units and divisions.¹²

Following Paul Beauchamp and M. Gilbert, Bizzeti takes issue with Reese's designation of the literary genre of Wis as a protreptic discourse and argues instead for its being an encomium, a species within the genre of epideictic, a rhetorical display (*epideixis*) whose primary function was originally to entertain and impress rather than to persuade, the latter being the function of forensic and deliberative oratory. It is clear that Wis is not a forensic discourse, but there are considerations that can connect it with the deliberative genre. Bizzeti argues, however, that although there are open appeals to the reader to pursue justice and wisdom, these follow upon the praise of wisdom. One ought to be guided by her as a result of having discovered that "all good things come together with her" (7:11). The heart of the book is not a preoccupation with the notion that the reader ought to follow a determinate choice, but rather the author's own love affair with wisdom and her works. Hence it is not the future that dominates this work but an encomium or celebration that rises from the author's intent meditation on the end time, which is already operating subterraneously in the present, illuminated by his contemplation of wisdom's grand works in the history of salvation. The maximum counsel given is essentially that of requesting wisdom in order to enjoy her. Moreover, while it is clear that the deliberative discourse is apt to offer proofs, it cannot be said that Wis has a form of argumentation based on demonstration.

Bizzeti's close analysis considerably advances our understanding of the literary genre of Wis, but the precise nature of that book's genre must, in my opinion, remain unsettled. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the protreptic is a union of the *symbouleutikon* and *epideiktikon*. It was much used by philosophers as well as orators and the element of display

10 WRIGHT, *The Structure of the Book; The Structure of Wisdom* 11-19; *Wisdom*.

11 GILBERT, *La Critique des Dieux; La Structure de la Prière de Salomon* (Sg 9). Gilbert later provided a full literary analysis of Wis in *Sagesse de Salomon*.

12 PERRENCHIO, *Struttura e analisi letteraria di Sapienza* 1,1-15; *Struttura e analisi letteraria di Sapienza* 1,16-2,24 e 5,1-23; BIZZETI, *Il Libro della Sapienza*. See the excellent summary of these developments in KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death* 1-28.

in it varies.¹³ Moreover, the rhetors made the *synkrisis* a separate *progymnasma* as well as a topic in the encomium, and it was clearly used in other kinds of composition. Furthermore, not only do we not possess, aside from fragments, any surviving examples of a protreptic discourse, but we do not even have an extant rhetorical treatment of it as a distinctive form of epideictic oratory. It is thus extremely difficult to determine whether Wis is an epideictic composition with an admixture of protreptic, or essentially a protreptic with a considerable element of epideictic. In my Anchor Bible commentary, as Bizzeti had duly noted, I conceded that none of the examples of protreptic available to us fit the peculiar mix of rhetorical elements found in Wis, but where so much has been lost it is not difficult to imagine that such examples did indeed exist.

3. Wisdom and Apocalyptic

We have already alluded to the unease experienced by the reader as he seeks to reconcile the apocalyptic component in Wis with its overarching philosophical worldview. Johannes Fichtner's designation of Wis as an apocalyptic or apocalypticizing wisdom book only serves to underscore the seeming discrepancy of these juxtaposed elements.

In a very perceptive study of this issue, John Collins has observed that Wis is in fact a prime example of a "direct rapprochement between the conventional biblical wisdom tradition and apocalyptic literature, providing an exceptional opportunity to study the degrees of compatibility and conflict between wisdom and apocalyptic patterns".¹⁴ The author of Wis depicts the universe as exhibiting a natural structure governed by the principle of divine justice and leading those who assimilate themselves to it to immortality and ultimate salvation. This immanent divine causality can even be described in explicitly physical terms, since *physis* and *to theion* have been seamlessly merged in this author's philosophical rhetoric. Although many have emphasized the fact that Ps-Solomon must supplicate his Lord in order to receive the gift of wisdom, and infer from this the need for a supernatural revelation if one is to partake of this cosmic wisdom, Collins has astutely observed that "the author's narrative makes it clear that when wisdom enters into people, it does not simply make them just. It is first of all an

13 See BURGESS, *Epideictic Literature* 112.

For a somewhat fuller discussion see my review of Bizzeti's book in CBQ 48 (1986) 525-27. For Reese's response to Bizzeti, see REESE, *A Semiotic Critique*.

14 COLLINS, *Cosmos and Salvation*, reprinted in ID., *Seers, Sibyls & Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* 317-38.

appropriation of wisdom that involves an 'unerring knowledge of existent being, to know the structure of the universe and the operation of the elements (7:17-18).' It is this understanding that leads to righteousness and so to immortality. The primary locus of revelation is the world, created by word and wisdom (9:1-2). Although Wisdom is given to Solomon in response to prayer (7:7), the gift consists of the ability to understand; it is not infusion of ready-made knowledge."

It is worth noting that the superiority of an understanding of the workings of the cosmos through direct and unmediated observation over that obtained secondhand under the tutelage of others is often emphasized by Philo of Alexandria. Noting particular gifts that it is fitting for God to give and for a man to receive, he cites Isaac's question, as he marveled at the speed with which Jacob had acquired his virtuous disposition, 'What is this that you have found so quickly, my son?' (Gen 27:20). He then observes that "the receiver of God's benefit, Jacob, answered rightly, 'it is what the Lord God delivered to me.' For the instructions delivered through men are slow, but those that come through God are exceedingly swift, outrunning even the swiftest movement of time." (Ebr. 19). The predigested knowledge mediated by teachers takes longer and falls far below that which is acquired through a naturally well-endowed nature. Similarly, when Philo speaks of the patriarchs' natural conformity to the laws of nature, he observes that "they were not scholars or pupils of others, nor did they learn under teachers what was right to say or do: they listened to no voice of instruction but their own." (Abr. 6; cf. Praem. 27; and especially Legat. 245, where this natural endowment is applied even to Petronius, the Roman legate of Syria). Such natural capacities are of course themselves the great gifts of God, but there is no reference here to divine revelation, that is, to an external, supernatural revelation.¹⁵ Even when the Rabbis claim that Abraham fulfilled the whole Law before it was given (M. Qid. 4.14), it appears from the formulation in Gen. R. 61.1 (Theodor-Albeck 2.657-58), where it is said that "the Blessed Holy One made his two kidneys serve like two teachers, and these welled forth and taught him wisdom," that God had endowed him with the natural capacity to gain a knowledge of the Law through his own reasoning. More explicit is the statement of R. Levi: "Abraham learnt the Torah from himself, for it is said, 'and a good man shall be satisfied from himself' (Prov 14:14) (Gen. R. 95.3, Theodor-Albeck 3.1189). Interestingly, Abraham Isaac Kook, Rabbi and mystic, similarly wrote:

15 Cf. Sac. 78-79: "We must not disown any learning made venerable through time... But when God brings forth young shoots of self-taught wisdom in the soul, we must immediately terminate and destroy the knowledge that comes from teaching, which even of itself retires and slips out of sight. God's pupil, disciple, or apprentice, or whatever those who label things ought to call him, can no longer suffer the guidance of men."

“Understanding from our own insight is the highest point of spiritual elevation. All that is learned is received from without, and its character is inferior relative to meditation within the inmost soul”.¹⁶

Collins sees personified wisdom in Hebrew tradition as representing an intermediary stage between Mythos and Logos, well-exemplified by such personified forces as Hesiod’s *Eros* and *Eris* in his *Theogony* and *Works and Days* respectively, where they are included among his deities. The same is true for the Egyptian goddess Ma’at, a personification of justice in the primeval order. Wis continues the Hebrew wisdom tradition, but it elaborates the wisdom figure along more philosophical and scientific lines. Finally, Collins summarizes the divergences between Jewish apocalypticism and Jewish wisdom as follows: “Wis uses the conceptual language of philosophy; apocalyptic, the personified language of mythology. Wis’ salvation is inherent in the world order, while apocalyptic posits a sharp break between the heavenly regions and rejects the earthly and the present world order. The Jewish sapiential tradition is based on the premise that wisdom can be found in all creation, whereas in apocalyptic wisdom has retired to heaven and can be known only by heavenly revelations”.¹⁷

Collins further notes that *Sapiential Work A* from Qumran (late first cent. BCE or early first cent. CE) “shows an even closer fusion of wisdom forms and apocalyptic worldview than the Epistle of Enoch (1 Enoch 91-104). Formally, this text is a wisdom instruction, and much of the practical wisdom it inculcates is similar to what we find in Ben Sira.” Its ethics, however, are grounded in a comprehensive view of the purpose of creation, summed up by the enigmatic phrase *רִי נִהְיֶה*, the mystery that is to be. Thus, at one point one of the ways in which he motivates his addressee to honor his parents is that “they uncovered your ear to the mystery that is to be.” Elsewhere he further warns him not to allow his wife to distract him from that mystery (4Q 416 3.18; 3.20-21). In another passage we read: “Gaze upon the mystery that is to be, and understand the birth-time of salvation, and know who is to inherit glory and trouble” (4Q 417 1.10-12). 4Q 416 appears to preserve the beginning of the work and seems to have provided a cosmological and eschatological framework for the document. We find reference to an epoch of wickedness and the era of truth, and the foolish are told that they were formed for Sheol and eternal damnation, whereas the inheritance of the righteous is eternal life. Moreover, there is an element of realized eschatology here, insofar as the elect are granted in this life to share the knowledge of angels and gaze at the mystery hidden from most of humanity. Collins concludes that this wisdom text “shows that the form of the wisdom instruction was not inherently wedded to the kind of worldview that we find in

16 Orot ha-Qodesh 1.178.

17 COLLINS, *Cosmos and Salvation*.

Proverbs, but could just as well be used in the service of an apocalyptic worldview. It also shows that the wisdom forms are not inherently wedded to natural theology. The *חכמה* *חכמה* presupposes a special revelation, just like the instruction of Enoch¹⁸.

4. Wisdom and Philosophy

Although it is true that the author of *Wis* has adapted the apocalyptic motif utilized by him to his larger philosophic worldview, we are nonetheless still confronted with a fundamental incongruity that seems to mar the unity of his work. In order to probe the nature of this dissonance it behooves us to establish the precise nature of the author's philosophic commitment. Collins correctly observes that the author of *Wis*' own belief is not the result of philosophical reasoning but of the faith inherited from his religious tradition, but his statement that Ps-Solomon's use of philosophy seems to be rhetorical rather than constructive is in need of further amplification. Even a cursory glance at his work makes it clear that it is a rhetorical composition rather than a philosophical treatise. We have already seen how artful and highly crafted his writing is, but it is equally evident that the whole is informed by a philosophical grasp and reflects a writer well grounded in the philosophical and mystical literature of the Hellenistic world. Even when he deals with a traditional biblical theme such as the measure for measure character of divine retribution, his philosophical training is fully in play. As Amir has correctly pointed out, in the elaborate syncretism that dominates the third part of the book, it is a philosophical principle that shapes the narrative. The author is simply not concerned with wicked acts as such, but with the irrationality in which they are rooted, an emphasis already evident in chaps. 1-2. This was a well established concept in Greek philosophy and is especially visible in Stoic ethical theory. The Stoics hold that the rightness of a wise man's actions is specifically indicated not by what he does but by the virtuous disposition his action exhibits, and virtue can be summed up as "the natural perfection of a rational being as a rational being" (D.L. 7.94 = SVF III, 76). Virtue is rational consistency, a character of the soul's commanding faculty, whereas the irrationality that constitutes vice is an aberrant state of the unitary reason (Plutarch, *Virt. Mor.* 440c). Similarly, at the heart of Maimonides' essays on ethics in *Eight Chapters* and the *Mishneh Torah*, which are clearly dependent on Aristotelian philosophy, lies the proposition that the terms virtuous and vicious are not

18 COLLINS, *Jewish Wisdom* 229.

properly predicated of human acts. The locus of virtue and vice is characteristics in the human soul. This philosophical principle is so fundamental for the author of *Wis*, that it colors the entire structure of his seven diptychs on the punishment of the wicked and the rewards of the righteous. What is crucial for Ps-Solomon is that “the culprits themselves be made aware of the relationship between their wrongdoing and the tribulations they suffer. To this end he invents, when narrating the death of the Egyptian first-born, horrid dreams and visions presaging the victims’ terrible fate ‘so that they should not die without knowing the reason they suffered so terribly’ (18:19)”.¹⁹

Collins has further rightly rejected Larcher’s opinion that the author of *Wis* “had read a little of everything but failed to grasp the totality of any philosophical system, or to appreciate the differences between the various schools.” There is, he thinks, “enough correspondence with Philo to debunk the idea that he was an idiosyncratic amateur making his own superficial use of philosophical terms... His concept of Wisdom is developed far beyond that of Ben Sira and is intelligible in the context of the Middle Platonic philosophy of his day”.²⁰

Is it true, nevertheless, that, as Reese would have it, “the author of *Wis*’ use of Hellenism is primarily strategic, serving merely to effect a bridge between received biblical faith and the contemporary situation of his readers?” What this view ignores, in my opinion, is the simple fact that Hellenistic Jewish thinkers often had first to convince themselves of the validity of their native tradition before they could apply themselves to convince others of its worth. Both Philo and the author of *Wis* have refracted their ‘ancestral philosophy’ (*Vit. Mos.* II, 216) through the lens of Middle Platonism, though this fact is not meant to imply that they were Middle Platonists tout court. Their work generally involved the linking of their Platonist convictions to Hebrew Scripture in an effort to preserve the Mosaic Torah both for themselves and for other like-minded Jews, who were unable to valorize that sacred text unless it could be shown to be compatible with philosophical reason.

We must now determine what were the fundamental assumptions of Ps-Solomon’s philosophical worldview and see if they are compatible with the apocalyptic element in his wisdom discourse. In a very insightful study on the biblical precedent for natural theology, Collins points out that in the wisdom books revelation does not involve a direct encounter with a personal God, but is found instead in the depth dimensions of common human experience. Although YHWH is the ultimate source of revelation, it is Wisdom that calls out. Her message is experienced as a gift, yet she is available

19 AMIR, *Measure for Measure* 29-46.

20 COLLINS, *Jewish Wisdom* 200, 202.

to all. The categorizing of wisdom literature as 'secular' is a consequence of the failure to recognize the religious dimensions of language that does not speak of an anthropomorphic God. It was von Rad who correctly outlined the religious dimensions of wisdom by singling out its two cardinal concepts, the human sense of limit and the recognition of cosmic order. The sense of human limit is pervasive in the wisdom literature. Friedrich Schleiermacher's 'feeling of absolute dependence' and Rudolf Otto's sense of the *mysterium tremendum* have underscored the finitude of humanity. Yet all religious language is founded on the assumption that there is some greater reality that transcends human limitations, an unchanging cosmic order. This concern for cosmic order is bound up with the so-called Act-Consequence relationship and the personification of wisdom. Klaus Koch noted the impersonal character of the sphere of human action, which is bounded by an immanent and necessary causality, not subject to external modification by YHWH. There is no talk of God's repentance or mercy in Proverbs. Similar conceptions of the world's structure are embodied in the Egyptian Ma'at, the Being of Parmenides, the Logos of Heraclitus and the Stoics, and Paul Tillich's 'Ground of Being'. Finally, although wisdom is nationalized in Deuteronomy (4:6), Ezra (7:14), and the Book of Baruch (3:9-37; 4:1), this was not the case in the wisdom literature. Ben Sira expands the concept of the Law so that it includes all forms of wisdom, and for him the significance of historical events is in the paradigms they provide for righteous behavior. This approach culminates in Wis' narration of Israel's history, in which all proper names are deleted. In brief, the sages perceived the religious character of the universe without resort to special revelation.

In a sense, the great merit of the wisdom literature lay in its ability to focus its gaze on empirical reality without losing itself in its surface manifestations. The untutored instinct tends to seek the outer limits; wisdom prefers to peer inward, to explore the depths of being in an effort to seek out its true meaning. "The surest way of misunderstanding revelation," wrote Abraham Joshua Heschel, "is to take it literally, to imagine that God spoke to the prophet on a long-distance telephone".²¹ Even more to the point is the remark of Abraham Isaac Kook: "We are not bothered by the fact that any aspect of Socratic justice is established without any divine acknowledgment, since we know full well that the very yearning for justice in whatever form it takes, is itself the most illuminating divine influence."

Returning to Wis, it is clear that, as Collins has noted, "the author of this work continues the search for a natural theology, antecedent to special revelation." We find here the same immanent divine causality that was always a part of the biblical wisdom literature. As the divine mind imma-

21 HESCHEL, *God in Search of Man* 178.

ment within the universe and guiding and controlling all its dynamic operations, Wisdom represents the entire range of the natural sciences; all human arts and crafts; ontology, logic, and rhetoric; and all moral knowledge. In a fine ode to Wisdom's saving power in history (10:1-21), the author assimilates the old covenantal salvation history with its miraculous and sudden divine irruptions to the immanent divine ordering of human events as mediated by the continuous activity of Wisdom. It is her generation by generational election of holy servants that structures the life of Israel.

It is especially significant that the author, unlike Ben Sira, nowhere explicitly identifies Wisdom with Torah, and with the exception of a brief historical reference in 18:9 makes no mention of the sacrificial cult. Nor is there any reference to such specific Jewish observances as circumcision, sabbath observance, or dietary laws. It is remarkable that where Isa 56:3 specifically refers to the eunuch's observance of the Sabbath, Wis 3:14 speaks only vaguely about his not acting unlawfully. Very likely, the author believed with Philo that the teachings of the Torah were tokens of divine wisdom, and were in harmony with the law of the universe and as such implant all the virtues in the human psyche. He conceives of Wisdom as a direct bearer of revelation, functioning through the workings of the human mind and supreme arbiter of all values. She is clearly the Archetypal Torah of the Kabbalists, of which the Mosaic Law is but an image. When he insists that unless God send his Wisdom down from on high humanity would not comprehend God's will (7:17), he is certainly implying that the Torah is in need of further interpretation for the disclosure of its true meaning, interpretation that Wisdom alone is able to provide. The author here closely approximates the position of Philo, in whose view, even before the Sinaitic revelation, the Patriarchs were already constituted *nomoi empsychoi*, animated laws or living embodiments of divine Wisdom. Similarly, in Wis 10, Sophia had already served as a personal guide to six righteous heroes who lived before the Sinaitic revelation.

Since Philo's theory of the natural law and its living embodiments is not entirely unambiguous and is often incorrectly understood, a brief summary analysis of his position will be helpful. What Philo appears to be saying is that the patriarchs and Moses, the living embodiments of natural law, were sages/philosophers who had a clear and accurate understanding of the Logos structure of the universe and consequently made all their actions to be in conformity with it. For non-sages, who lack that unique insight, Moses formulated rules and precepts that may be derived from the archetypal actions of the sages. He was able to do so inasmuch as he had himself become assimilated to the Logos and therefore could derive from the lives of the patriarchs and from his own life the general rules and precepts that these lives exemplified. Thus, the exemplary lives of Moses and the

patriarchs actually are or constitute laws of nature. As Aristotle had put it, "a cultivated or free man is, as it were, a law unto himself" (Eth. Nic. 4.1128a31), and similarly, according to R. Moses Hayyim Ephraim Sudilkov, "the Zaddik himself is the Law and Commandment." On the other hand, the enacted laws of Moses cannot be spoken of as embodiments of the laws of nature, but are rather 'copies' or 'memorials' of the natural law embodied by the patriarchs, and as mere copies they can be written down. There is, however, no substitute for the direct insight into the Logos structure of the universe, which unfortunately is available only to the sages/philosophers. No general rules or precepts can serve in its stead, since every situation requiring action differs to a greater or lesser degree from every other. Thus the rules and precepts formulated by Moses are at best only general guidelines for what needs to be done. The ultimate criterion of the correct interpretation of the Mosaic Law is the unwritten law of nature, the Logos structure of the universe. That this was not a Jewish Hellenistic distortion of the nature of Jewish law can be seen from the fact that a great traditional halakhist such as R. Moses Israel Hazan, who for a period of five years was the chief Rabbi of Rome, when dealing with the question of whether the Halakha could promulgate norms that were contrary to reason, held that this was theoretically impossible, since "the true faith and reason were given by one shepherd".²²

We are now prepared directly to confront the apocalyptic elements in Wis. Although there are some similarities here to other apocalyptic summaries of history, there are nonetheless important differences. In the Apocalypse of Weeks (1 Enoch 93:1-10 and 91:11-17), as Collins has pointed out, there is a move to a predetermined goal that involves a judgment and a new creation, but in Wis 10 and in the book as a whole, historical progress has no significance. There is no turning point in Wis and the goal is accessible irrespective of chronological progression. The story of Israel, as Collins neatly puts it, is a cosmic allegory that could in principle be appropriated by any righteous people. Moreover, in the apocalyptic tableau in 5:15-23, although God makes creation a weapon that 'joins him in all-out war against the madmen,' there is no apocalyptic new creation such as that of Isa 11 and 65:17. It is not even clear, as Collins remarks, that the cosmos reaches a final state, but only that it will be consistently subservient to God's purposes.²³

Indeed, the author's eschatological descriptions form a sort of chiaroscuro lacking any clear definition. He moves fitfully through alternating patches of darkness and light, almost deliberately blurring the points of transition. This deliberate vagueness betrays the author's own unease

22 *Kerekh shel Romi* 3A.

23 COLLINS, *Jewish Wisdom* 214-15.

with the apocalyptic vision to which he had recourse. Another indication of his unease with miraculous divine interventions is his attempt to provide a philosophical interpretation of the passage through the Red Sea. By the Hellenistic age it was a commonplace in Greek philosophy that the stuff of which the world is made is unqualified matter and that therefore the elements are mutually interchangeable. Even the tough-minded Stoics could not resist resorting to this principle in their attempt to explicate the art of divination and the various miracles associated with it.²⁴ The slaying of the Egyptian first-born would have been much more difficult to explain in a naturalistic way, and the author of *Wis* made no effort to do so. In fact, he was unable in this case to resist the temptation to describe it in distinctively mythic language (18:15-16). Nevertheless, whenever possible, he does his best to emphasize the stable structure of the universe, the inherent flexibility of which allows for considerable variations, including very unusual occurrences. The Stoic philosopher Seneca, for example, wrote: "Anyone who thinks that nature is not occasionally able to do things she has not done frequently, simply does not understand the power of nature." (*Nat. Quaest.* 7.27.5).

In spite of the attempt on part of the author of *Wis* to moderate the apocalyptic element that confronts us so starkly at the very beginning of the book, and reappears in the extended Exodus account, the reader is nonetheless jolted by these rude juxtapositions. Considerable light, however, is shed by an examination of an analogous ambivalence that runs through Philo's various references to the uniqueness of the people of Israel. While most of these represent nationalistic sentiments that have been transposed to the spiritual plane, a few firmly cling to the earthly realm of physical reality. Philo is evidently unable to make a clean sweep of all the terrestrial aspects of Jewish messianism, and in spite of his overall attempt to depoliticize and psychologize the traditional conceptions, we find an unassimilable residue of the latter scattered through his writings. Despite all the juggling, enough of the earthly sphere remains in Philo's messianic vision (*Praem.* 163-72) to reveal the inner tensions in his thought between nationalism and universalism, the mystical and the this-worldly.²⁵

Philo's conception of the world historical process appears to be strictly impersonal. The sequence of world empires is determined by a cosmic principle of equality, a fundamental characteristic of the divine Logos. Whenever this principle is violated and some city or nation arrogates to itself more than its proper share of power and possessions, a redistribution takes place that eliminates the dislocation that had momentarily disturbed the balance of the divine economy. Philo sees this as a cyclic dance of the Logos in which persistent imbalances and inequalities that continuously invade the cosmic

24 See WINSTON, *Philo of Alexandria* 17-21; STERLING, *The Ancestral Philosophy* 59-77.

25 See WINSTON, *Logos and Mystical* 55-58.

order are periodically redressed. But if this dance of the Logos involves a 'perpetual flux', how is it to be reconciled with Philo's belief in the ultimate advent of a messianic age? The answer appears to be that the rotational equality that rules the present cosmic era will ultimately be replaced by a steady-state form of equality. The ideal natural law embodied in the Mosaic Torah will then govern all the nations of the world, so that there will no longer be any dislocations in the divine economy and hence no need for periodic redistributions. In short, the fundamental principle of equality that characterizes the Logos will not be replaced or diminished in any way, although its mode of operation will be modified. But although it is thus possible to reconcile Philo's philosophical conception of divine providence with the Jewish apocalyptic messianic vision, he clearly sensed the sharp tension between these two conceptualizations, for he restricted his comments on the latter to a few brief passages in *Praem.* 163-72, and even there his denationalizing and psychologizing approach entailed a far-reaching modification of the Jewish prophetic view.

Clearly, both Philo and the author of *Wis* shared the need to reconcile two opposing conceptualizations of divine providence, though neither of them succeeded fully in doing so. But while in Philo's vast oeuvre the few passages in which he presents his quasi-apocalyptic messianic vision are easily overlooked, in the relatively short discourse of *Ps-Solomon* the apocalyptic vision makes an unmistakable impact and is therefore more troublesome. In light of the inability of both Philo and the author of *Wis* successfully to integrate their apocalyptic visions into their philosophical understanding of divine providence, there is a considerable degree of plausibility in the conjecture that, like Philo, *Ps-Solomon* also wrote against the backdrop of a very severe persecution. To be sure, Collins may well be correct in arguing that *Ps-Solomon's* account of the persecution of the righteous bears the character of a quasi-philosophical argument about the profitability of justice, rather than that of a veiled historical commentary on an actual occurrence. I would argue nevertheless, that we are still left with no adequate explanation as to what induced our author to display so prominently an apocalyptic scene that clashes so blatantly with his philosophical convictions. Thus the plausibility of dating *Wis* to the period of the great persecution during Caligula's reign remains unimpaired. Nonetheless, since a conjecture, however plausible, is nothing more than that, I fully agree with Collins that "the book could have been written at any time in the century from 30 BCE to 70 CE."²⁶

26 COLLINS, *Jewish Wisdom* 179, 195.

5. Wisdom and Scripture

The interpretation of Scripture in *Wis* is both similar and dissimilar to that employed in Philo's massive philosophical commentary on the Bible. The dissimilarity is made immediately evident by Philo's elaborate allegorization of Scripture and Ps-Solomon's rejection of that approach and his preference for symbolic interpretations instead. On the other hand, there is a striking similarity in the way in which they utilize Scripture. Neither of them is concerned to provide biblical commentary as such. Each has an *agendum* that requires a considerable amount of biblical exegesis, but this is only secondary to their primary objectives. Since the discussion of this issue with regard to Philo is still enveloped in controversy, we will begin with him.

Although David Runia carefully moderates Valentin Nikiprowetzky's position in this matter, he nevertheless endorses his view that "Philo's extensive and idiosyncratic application of the doctrines and language of the *Timaeus* must be seen as resulting from the fact that he regards himself as an exegete of Scripture, whose task is to search for the 'authentic philosophy' embodied in the Mosaic record."²⁷ What is clearly overlooked here is that the key to gauging Philo's true intentions lies in the peculiar nature of his exegesis, namely, its midrashic / allegorical character. P. S. Alexander captures the special character of midrashic interpretation in the following remarks: "Midrash is as much a means of imposing ideas upon Scripture as of deriving ideas from Scripture. It often presupposes a body of tradition that grew up independently of Scripture, and which was then related to Scripture and presented in the form of Bible commentary... In the *Zohar*, a full-blown mystical system can be found presented in the form of midrash, but surely no one would suggest that this system emerged naturally, simply from meditation on Scripture. The system grew independently, and was forcibly read into Scripture."²⁸ It is instructive in this regard to recall that the Rabbis, who consistently derived their legal teachings from the Mosaic text, apparently did not literally believe in their Mosaic authorship.²⁹ To see Philo primarily as an exegete of Scripture is therefore quite misleading, and the same may be said of the author of *Wis*.

In spite of the fact that the author of *Wis* is not as philosophically inclined as Philo and has chosen philosophical rhetoric as the vehicle of his religious message in lieu of an extended philosophical exposition, he is equally driven by the need to fuse Jewish tradition with Greek philosophy in an attempt to defend its integrity both in the face of persecution and the intellectual

27 RUNIA, *Philo of Alexandria* 538.

28 ALEXANDER, *3 Enoch and the Talmud* 67, n. 26.

29 See *B. Menahot* 29b.

challenges of pagan culture. As Peter Enns has put it, “it is evident that *Wis* is not a commentary on Scripture, but a search for wisdom, for God’s overarching eternal plan, on the basis of Scripture.” Enns further points out that at the time *Wis* was written, there already existed an extensive set of exegetical tradition concerning the Pentateuch in particular, and that some of Ps-Solomon’s comments are early witnesses to interpretive traditions that only surface fully in later rabbinic works. More important is the fact that Ps-Solomon does not reproduce these traditions in their fullness, alluding to them in little more than a phrase, and some times merely a word.

“This exegetical shorthand,” writes Enns, “speaks to the antiquity and widely dispersed nature of these traditions by the first century CE. How else are we to understand, for example, his almost offhand mention of ‘babes’ singing at sea, the payment the Israelites received for their period of slavery, or the grassy path through the sea if not within a well-established context of second Temple interpretive activity?”³⁰

Much of what Ps-Solomon says about Scripture is ultimately motivated by various problematic locutions in the biblical text. Earlier exegetes had already dealt with these textual problems and many of their narrative expansions made in response to them formed a kind of biblical exegesis that eventually became associated with the biblical story itself and soon became a part of its retelling. James Kugel correctly emphasized that these expansions “do not constitute ‘pure’ exegesis, since many of these exegetes were expositors with an axe to grind”.³¹

I conclude with Enns’ observation that “though *Wis* is addressed to pagan rulers, it is not likely that they were the actual, intended audience, but merely provided the literary context in which Ps-Solomon could address his beleaguered countrymen. Could he really expect the rulers of his day to have been moved by admonitions to follow the ways of wisdom? The likelihood is rather that Ps-Solomon was telling his audience that these pagan rulers were in reality doomed to certain judgment and destruction.”

30 See ENNS, *Exodus Retold* 135-54.

31 See KUGEL, *In Potiphar’s House* 247-48.

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